

Moments in History

Articles about Fairfield, Solano County and the people who made this area their home.



Compiled by the Daily Republic in honor of the centennial of Fairfield's incorporation, Dec. 12, 1903 - Dec. 12, 2003.
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During the years I taught in the Fairfield-Suisun School District, I had an abiding interest in history. I clipped many items from the Daily Republic, especially when they contained information about local history. I used them often. Some were used on bulletin boards and some I had my students use as resources to create two books about local history. We would often read an article as a class and then rewrite in our own words until my third-graders could do this independently and were pleasantly surprised they really could write in their own words.

When the city of Fairfield asked me to help with an educational component of the upcoming Fairfield centennial, I gave the articles I had collected to Kathleen L'Ecluse. The Daily Republic had the articles on microfiche, which wouldn't have included pictures. With much labor on her part, she created this book as a resource. We are all very thankful to the Daily Republic and Kathleen for their cooperation and helpfulness. They really were driving forces for Fairfield's centennial. Thank you.

Barbara Van Putten

We would like to thank Barbara Van Putten for her contributions to this compilation of Daily Republic articles. Thanks also to Kim Durbin for the cover and page design and Kinko's for the copying discount.

For more information about this resource, contact Kathleen L'Ecluse, City Editor, Daily Republic, 1250 Texas St., Box 47, Fairfield, Calif. 94533, or e-mail klecluse@dailyrepublic.net.

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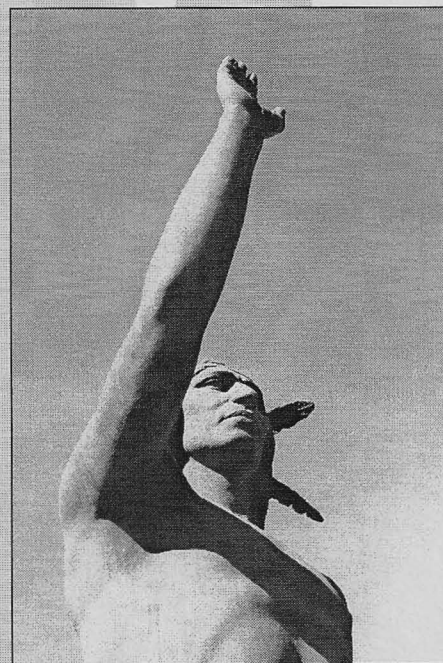
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People

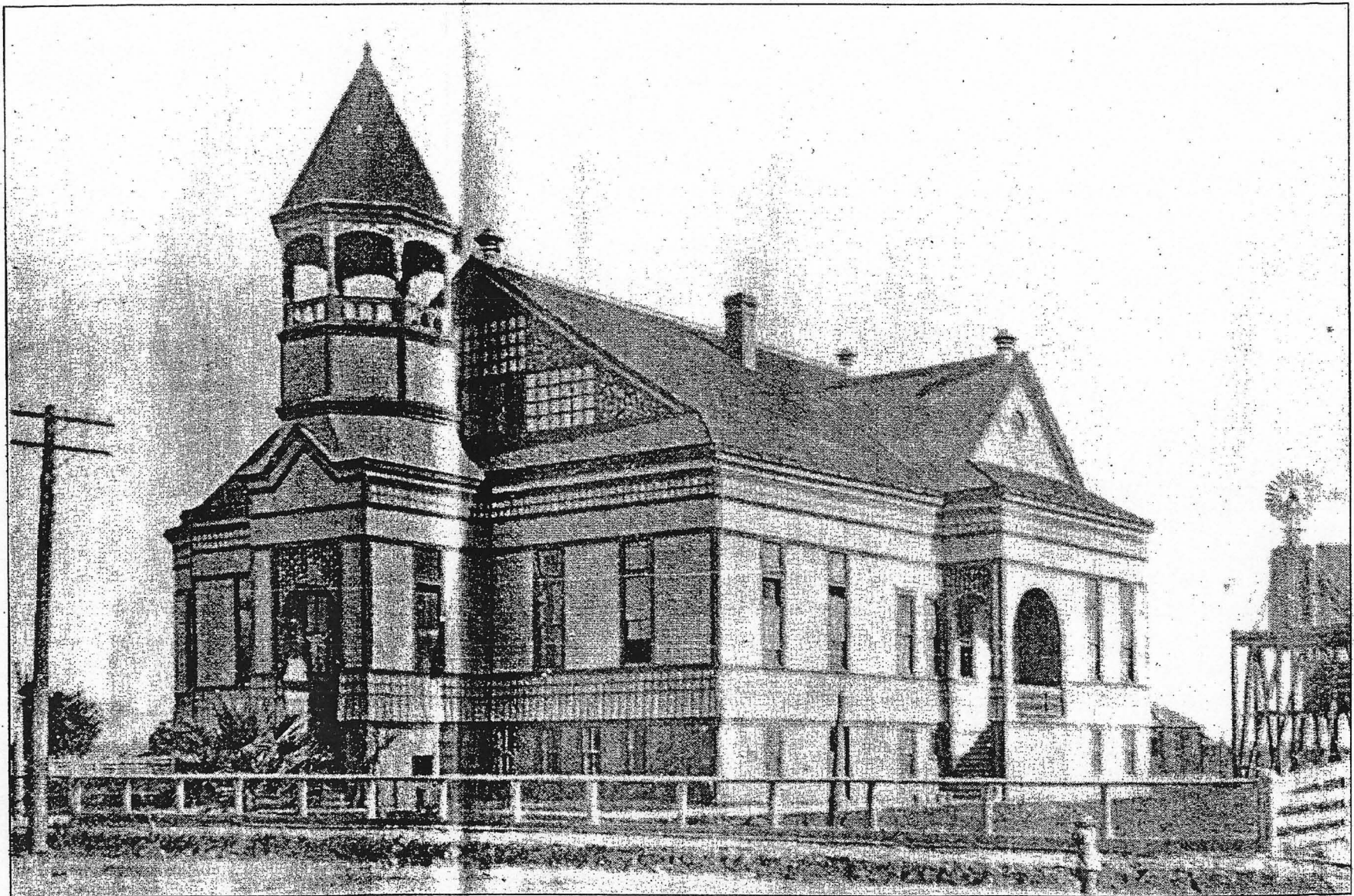


A statue of Chief Solano stands in a garden on the corner of Texas and Union streets in Fairfield.



LIVING

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 22, 2003 • DAILY REPUBLIC



COURTESY PHOTOS/Vacaville Heritage Council

The original Armijo High School stood on the south end of "Courthouse Square" from 1893 until 1913.

Armijo family prospered

ON TOLENAS LAND GRANT

Solano County was originally made up of six Spanish/Mexican land grants, all acquired by General Mariano Vallejo.

He encouraged Mexican and American citizens to settle in Northern California, purchase land from Vallejo, raise cattle and their own little empires. One of those

families were the Armijos, who arrived in the Suisun Valley around 1842.

In 1848, just two years after the Bear Flag Party established the Republic of California at Sonoma, President James Polk, as a

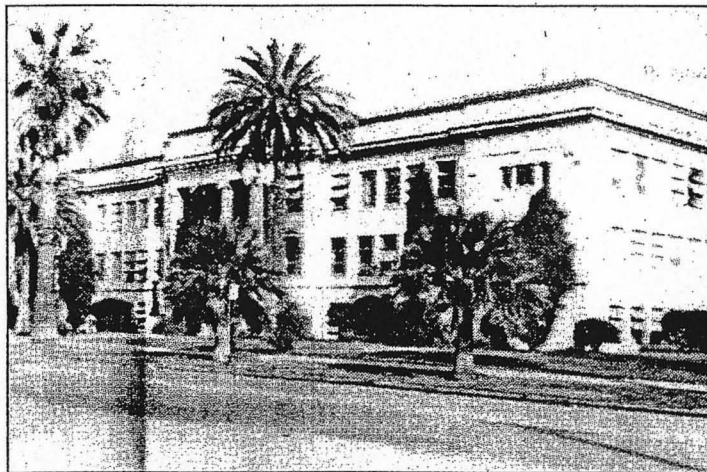


Nancy Dingler

Solano in retrospect

political promise of "Manifest Destiny," took Texas, California, New Mexico and Arizona from Mexico.

The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo that came out of the "war" promised to honor the Mexican land grants. Of course, when California became a state, the treaty's terms were tested in the courts, causing many of the land grants to be lost to the original grantees.



The "new" Armijo High was gutted by fire in 1929. It was rebuilt and served until 1970 when it was sold to the county.

Mariano Vallejo's six grants in Solano county consisted of:

■ The Suscol: Lying in the southern and western portion – including townships of Vallejo and Benicia.

■ The Suisun: Lying to the east of the Suscol, including within its limits the whole of Suisun Valley, together with the towns of Suisun and Fairfield.

■ The Tolenas, or Armijo: Lying to the north and east of the Suisun.

■ The Los Putos or Vaca and Pena: Lying to the northeast of the

Armijo, covering the town of Vacaville and the whole of Vaca valley.

■ The Rio Los Putos or Wolfskill: Lying to the northwest of the Los Putos and on both sides of Putah creek, both Solano and Yolo counties.

■ The Ulpinos or Bidwell: Located in the eastern portion of the county, at the junction of the Sacramento River and Cache Slough, covering the town of Rio Vista and the Montezuma hills.

Jose Francisco Armijo, through Vallejo, made a formal request of

the Mexican government for the purchase of the Tolenas land grant. In 1840 Governor Alvarado granted Armijo's request and issued a new grant of three square leagues.

In 1842, Jose brought his four sons, wife and daughter and 100 head of cattle from New Mexico and built an adobe house about 5 miles northwest of Fairfield.

The Armijo family prospered in this vast land, where their nearest neighbors were the Vacas and Penas of Vaca Valley and Chief Solano on his ranch near Rockville.

The Suisun Grant was given to Chief Solano, separate from Vallejo – but was acquired by Vallejo, when it was contended that the Chief abandoned it. When the Armijo patriarch, Jose Francisco died unexpectedly in 1849, there was already a dispute between the Armijos and Vallejo over the exact boundary location of the Suisun and Tolenas grants.

Vallejo instituted a legal action of trespass against the Armijos. Under Mexican law, all legal disputes were brought before the local Alcalde (justice of the peace). In this case, the Alcalde was L.W. Boggs.

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Vallejo claimed that a certain Arroyo Seco, or dry gulch, formed the line, placing the boundary quite a way to the north. The difference in question involved several thousand acres of land. It was finally agreed that the matter would be submitted to two arbitrators, whose decision was final.

Jose's son, Antonio, had this legal suit thrust upon him after his father's death. The arbitrators were assigned. Cajetano Juarez was selected for Vallejo, and ironically Salvador Vallejo (Mariano's brother) was selected for the Armijos.

One might instantly jump to the conclusion that the deck was stacked against Antonio. As it turned out, a civilized and fair judgment was rendered. Antonio presented documents that his father had gathered before his death. They clearly determined that the dry gulch was part of the Tolenas grant.

For a time, the matter was regarded as settled, but the question came up again when Archibald A. Ritchie purchased Vallejo's interest and procured a United States patent for a large tract of land, which included in its limits, the controversial boundary. He sold one-third of this acquisition to Capt. Robert Waterman.

The Ritchie/Waterman party claimed that the patent was superior to the award made by the arbitrators, though their decision had been made before the Ritchie claim.

For a time, bitter warfare, with frequent acts of violence

SUPPORT THE MUSEUM PLAN

Maggie Halls and The Solano Historical Society, as well as others interested in the history of Solano County are trying to get a county museum established in Fairfield.

Display cases are going to be available at City Hall exhibiting some of the artifacts and photos that have been in private collections. Local history is rapidly disappearing.

Wouldn't it be wonderful to have a safe repository for this history? If you concur, please let county and city officials know of your support for a museum.

and bloodshed, was waged by both sides, in and out of court. The case was finally decided upon appeal to the Supreme Court in the famed Waterman vs. Smith legal decision.

The dispute continued for several years, until compromises were agreed to. When finally the disputes were all settled and over with, the land rapidly increased in value, amply repaying those who had succeeded in retaining their claims after so many years of stubborn and tenacious warfare.

By 1858, Waterman decided to enhance the value of the property by giving four city blocks to the township of Fairfield, with the proviso that the county seat be moved from Benicia. Put to a vote, the measure was approved and the first buildings were erected in Court House Square.

By 1893, at the south end of this square, the town built the first high school and named it

after the Armijo family. It was a wooden two-story Queen Anne-style building.

By 1913, it was decided that the town needed a large and more ornate high school. The new school was designed by architect Henry Smith. It was to be a neo-classical style to complement the courthouse on Union Avenue that was completed in 1911.

The "new" Armijo high school faced Union Avenue from Texas Street and was completed by 1915. Then tragedy struck the beautiful, new Armijo High in 1929. A fire swept through the building, destroying almost everything.

According to newspaper reports, the fire was caused by faulty wiring. All that remained was the four outer walls. Teachers, students and staff were scattered in buildings throughout the city, including Suisun, while insurance claims allowed for the rebuilding to its former splendor and the reopening a year later.

Over the years, the Tolenas/Armijo grant was broken up through inheritance and land sales. In 1970, the school district sold the high school for \$1 to Solano County to become the Hall of Justice, because of failing earthquake standards. The Armijo name lives on in the present "modern" high school.

Nancy Dingler is a Vacaville resident, writer and historian. You can e-mail her at History_Whiz10@yahoo.com.

Early contributors

Solano enriched by deeds of pioneer women

(Editor's Note: This is part of an occasional series about Solano County's past.)

By Ian Thompson
Daily Republic Staff Writer

FAIRFIELD — Solano County's history is not completely made up of heroic events by men.

Ever since pioneering days, women have made a significant impression on the county's direction, whether it was in education, social awareness or politics.

But it didn't start that way.

Except for mentions in the census reports as either a wife or mother, Solano County's first women are almost nameless.

"There was scant information about her background, and never was she interviewed. But thankfully she kept her own private records," wrote local historian Mary Higham in "Pioneer Collections of Solano County."

"The letters she wrote home telling of her new life in the wilderness would later surface and cast a spotlight on her inner feelings as a woman.

"Her lasting records were in her family Bible, which would bridge the generations. Here she would put down the joyous occasion of a new baby. With great care, she recorded the date, the place, and even the hour," Higham wrote.



It was here also, she all too often recorded the deaths of her children who lived and died during a time when the frontier experienced a high infant mortality rate.

The census' names included those such as Nancy Alford, married to Suisun Valley settler Nathan Barbour; Mercy Crosby, married to Suisun City's founder Josiah Wing; Anna Bellows, married to Vacaville's L.W. Buck; and Inaz Berryessa married to Demetrio Pena of the Vaca-Pena Rancho.

There is no mention at all of non-whites such as Indians, blacks, Chinese or Japanese.

But tales and legends of upper Solano County's women eventually emerged.

One of those is of jealous Cordelia Sterl-

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Pioneers

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ing, married in 1846 to sea captain and Fairfield founder Robert H. Waterman in Bridgeport, Conn. Cordelia's jealousy was responsible for the naming of the town of Cordelia.

When Waterman was laying out Fairfield, Cordelia looked over his shoulder to see that he was naming a street — Great Jones Street — after the New York boulevard where Judge Samuel Jones and his daughter Cynthia lived, a place Waterman visited as a young man.

It was stated that Cynthia and Waterman were more than friends and the relationship persisted after his marriage, a fact that perturbed Cordelia. That he was naming a street after them didn't improve matters, according to historian David Weir.

"I see you haven't forgotten your old sweetheart Cynthia Jones and have immortalized her memory by naming a Fairfield street Great Jones," Cordelia said, according to Weir.

Waterman protested, saying it was after the judge that the street was named, but that didn't convince her. He even pointed out he named Bridgeport after her birthplace. But Cordelia was adamant. She insisted on having a city named after her.

The sea captain decided that conciliation was the better part of matrimony and gave in and renamed Bridgeport, located west of Fairfield after Cordelia.

With the influx of people into the county,

education was one of the few professions women could go into just after the turn of the century. This brought pioneers of a different sort — educators such as Mary Bird, E. Ruth Sheldon, Amy Blanc, Cleo Gordon and Anna Kyle.

Bird, daughter of a Vacaville pioneer, was an early practitioner of individualized teaching at the old rural Dover Elementary School.

Sheldon was another who's first post was in the now lost community of Batavia. A meticulous teacher, she rose to become primary education consultant for the Solano County Office of Education and later a member of that school board.

Kyle was a traveling music teacher who braved fog and grass fires to bring her lessons to the rural schools scattered across the upper county from Collinsville to Mix Canyon.

Travis Air Force Base had its own legend, Mary Rose Enos, known more by airmen and officers in the 1950s and 1960s as "Mother Travis."

Enos and her husband owned land which was bought to build Travis AFB. From completion, Enos was active in base activities, especially the baby sitting of many commanding officers' children. She also offered a friendly ear to relieve the homesickness of an airman.

Travis AFB loved Enos in return. When the first C-141, "Golden Bear," arrived, Enos was one of the first to fly in it. It was also her first flight. When she died, one officer who attended the Chapel One service said the audience was "a sea of Air Force blue."

Vallejo: the man who shaped California history

Without a doubt, the single most influential person in California history was Mariano Guadalupe Vallejo.

Mariano was one of those rare individuals, in that he was born and educated in California. Mariano rose



Nancy Dingler
Solano in retrospect

to great heights of power and wealth, only to lose it when his dream of being part of the democratic America came true.

In 1807, California was a far-off backwater frontier claimed by Spain. Born in Monterey, Mariano was baptized at the mission.

The Spanish incursion into California was feeble and tenuous. Aside from the string of missions established by Father Junipero Serra and a few military garrisons or presidios, the country was devoid of European communities.

The land was wild, hilly and mountainous and the overwhelming population consisted of indigenous natives, many who had been subjugated and taken as slaves into the mission system and the scattered ranchos. The land was also populated by wild game, millions of birds and grizzly bears.

The missions and rancheros engaged in raising cattle, which were slaughtered for their hides. Trading



Lt. M.G. Vallejo, shown here in his early 20s, before the conquest of Alta (Northern) California, married Francisca Benicia Carrillo in 1832.

ships would regularly drop anchor along the California coastline to pick up the dried hides, dubbed "California dollars."

Mariano's father, Sergeant Ignacio Ferrer Vallejo, had served as a military escort for Father Serra. Mariano commented years later that his father was a "brilliant spirit with an unequalled propensity for taking part in wars, intrigues and amusements." Ignacio had trained for the priesthood. He met Maria Antonio Lugo and through an arranged marriage by her parents, he married the 14-year-



COURTESY PHOTOS/Vacaville Heritage Council

old. The union produced 13 children.

Mariano's father befriended an Englishman, William Hartnell, who was a purchasing agent for John Begg & Co. Through this friendship, Hartnell became the Vallejo children's tutor. Hartnell took a special liking to Mariano, teaching him English, French and Latin. Hartnell also put Mariano to work for him and later for David Spence, where he kept accounts.

Mariano was thirsty for knowledge and would in time acquire a sizable library. Another mentor to Mariano,

was the Spanish governor of Alta (Northern) California, Pablo Vicente de Sola. Sola selected three boys for special attention, M.G. Vallejo, Juan B. Alvarado (a future governor) and Jose Castro (a future commandant general).

The influence of the father upon his sons was evident when Mariano and his brother, Salvador, chose military careers. Salvador would serve by his brother's side his entire life.

Perhaps their choice was also colored by a memorable incident in 1818, when an Argentine force lead by Hippolyte Bouchard, raided Monterey. Bouchard claimed to be out to change Spanish rule and had sailed to California to recruit volunteers.

The 300 or so citizens of Monterey fled into the surrounding hills. Since he could not convince anyone to join his cause, Bouchard allowed his men to loot the homes and then set the fort and presidio ablaze.

When Bouchard and his freedom fighters left, the people returned to find their possessions in ruins. Californians could not count on Spain to protect them — they had to look to defend themselves. This lesson always weighed heavily on Mariano.

One of Lt. Vallejo's first orders was to be sent to the mission at San Diego. While stationed there, he met his future life partner, Francisca Benicia Carrillo.

The marriage was delayed until 1832 because of the Mexican revolution against Spain. Mariano, along with Alvarado and Castro began to dream of a California independent from Mexico. Not achieving actual independence, they accepted large land grants from the new Mexican government in exchange for their loyalty and services.

By 1834, with Francisca and their first born, Mariano is assigned to Sonoma, the farthest northern outpost to protect Mexican interests against Russian incursions. When Mexico won its independence from Spain, the mission system collapsed under secularization.

The rancheros took what they needed and left the structures to melt into ruins. Mariano saw to the dismantling of Mission San Francisco de Solano at Sonoma, cannibalizing what he wanted into his hacienda under construction in Petaluma as well as the town of Sonoma.

Mariano brought the natives under control through

SPECIAL EVENT

Everyone is welcome on April 27 to celebrate Heritage and Railroad Day in Old Town Cordelia. There will be historical displays, Wild West reenactments and lots of rides for kids of all ages, booths full of food and much, much more. Festivities begin at 10 a.m.

an alliance with Chief Solano. In thanks, Don Vallejo procured a land grant for the chief.

As the Vallejo family grew, so did their land grants and wealth. At the hacienda in Petaluma they raised cattle and crops. Their Indian servants helped maintain the self-sufficiency that was required.

There were weavers, iron forgers, tanners, grain threshers, and saddlers. Californios (as they liked to be called) never went anywhere without a horse under them. To maximize his holdings, Mariano was always looking for settlers to buy land. He was most fond of Americans for they seemed to be the hardiest, most skilled and self-sufficient of all the "foreigners."

It was estimated the Vallejo income to be \$96,000 a year in hide and tallow, alone. By the 1850s his land acquisitions encompassed more than 175,000 acres.

More and more Americans were making the arduous trek over the Sierra to reach the safety of Sutter's Fort at Sacramento. To be able to stay and travel about California, they needed a passport. Don Vallejo made arrangements and encouraged the new settlers to purchase land, establish ranchos and towns.

When the Bear Flag party, made up of these Americans, took Sonoma the morning of June 14, 1846, they made a special point not to harm Vallejo or any of the other Californios. It was well-known where Vallejo's sympathies lay.

The inevitable war between the United States and Mexico ended with the signing of the treaty of Guadalupe Hildago, in which the Mexican land grants were to be honored. This later, was challenged in the courts, which took years. The expense of lawyers and

the loss in many of the cases, spelled doom for the Californios, including the Vallejos.

Vallejo was called to serve in the State legislature. The town of Vallejo was named in his honor, as was the town of Benicia, for his wife. No longer with servants in his later years, Mariano tended to the remains of his estate on 228 acres until his death in 1890.

To learn more about Gen. Vallejo, read "General M.G. Vallejo and the Advent of the Americans" by Alan Rosenus. Past issues of The Solano Historian also provide valuable information.



I would like to make a special note – that this is the third anniversary of this column. Many thanks to the avid interest and contributions by the special people that make research and writing so enjoyable.

Nancy Dingler is a Vacaville resident, writer and historian. You can e-mail her at History_Whiz10@yahoo.com.

Gordon helps Bear Flag party, sends sons to protect Gen. Vallejo

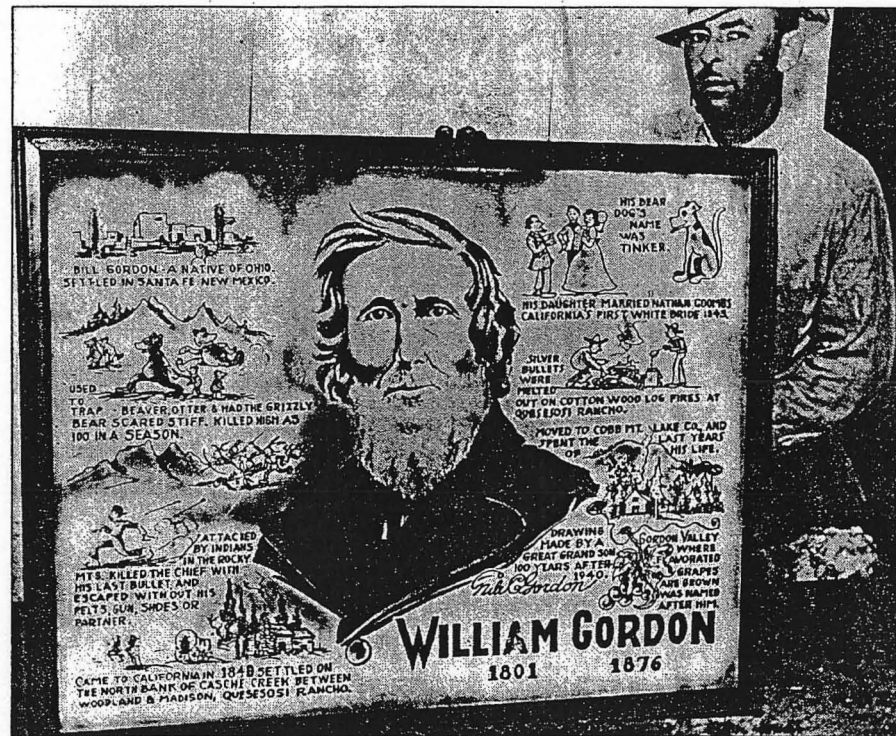


Nancy Dingler
Solano in retrospect

It was a late June evening when the 20 men rode into William Gordon's ranch at Cache Creek. These men were on a mission. Under the auspices of John C. Fremont, they were going to take Gen. Mariano Vallejo into custody in their bid to wrest California territory away from Mexico.

"Bill" Gordon provided a quick meal and a place for the men to rest their horses before they crossed Berryessa and the Blue Ridge mountains into Pope Valley, where Major Barnard killed a bullock for them. The original 20 and their recruits swelled the number to around 35. They enjoyed a fine barbecue before leaving at midnight with their hunting dogs to meet others at Bale's mill before going on to Vallejo's rancho at Sonoma.

At dawn on that Sunday morning, our Flag Day, June 14, 1846, General



COURTESY PHOTO

Bill Gordon Sr. met Mariano Vallejo in 1840 and the two became good friends.

Vallejo was awakened by a grubby-looking bunch of men in their hunting garb. Thus, as they say, their deed became the stuff of legends.

Gen. Vallejo's outpost, which governed all the land to the Oregon line,

was not very secure. Capturing Vallejo signified that they had captured the Mexican officer of longstanding, consistent authority, for all of the region north of San Francisco. If the Mexican governor Micheltorena had

not become so alarmed by Fremont's incursion and reacted by ordering all foreigners out of California, then having the Mexican troops confiscate 250 of Castro's horses, the other "Californios," might not have rallied to Fremont's banner.

Bill Gordon provided not just a meal and possibly some fresh mounts to the famous Bear Flag party, but insisted that his sons join the men to make sure no harm came to the Vallejos. General Vallejo had been a most generous friend, while the ambitious Fremont was not to be fully trusted, especially with the safety of Vallejo or his family. John and Thomas Gordon joined the Party.

Benicia Vallejo, along with her husband, the general, were very apprehensive. They expected that the surrender committee would arrive in dress uniform of the U.S. Navy or Army. The general donned his uniform and presented his sword as the committee got down to the business of drawing up the surrender terms.

William Gordon was a young man when he left his home in Ohio, striking out for the Mexican territory of New Mexico. There, he converted his faith and swore his allegiance to the Mexican government. He did settle down in New Mexico where he

Dingler From Page D1

married and began a family. In the spring of 1840, he got the "fiddle foot" again, and moved his family to the tiny pueblo of Los Angeles, via Arizona. While in Los Angeles, he was introduced to Mariano Vallejo. Vallejo took a liking to Bill and convinced him to come to Northern California. To sweeten the deal, Vallejo made Bill the Director of Colonization of the Northern District. With wives and young children in tow, Bill, along with several other families, crossed the Carquinez Strait by rowboats, allowing

the horses to swim.

By 1841, the Indians were friendly, having been brought under control through the joint efforts of Gen. Vallejo, his brother Salvador and his ally, Chief Solano of the Suisuns. Upon reaching the northern banks of the Carquinez, the group engaged the local Indians as guides up the Napa River.

They camped at a site under some sycamore trees, where today is the home of George Yount, one of the members of the party from Los Angeles. Bill hung around

Yount's ranch, with his family, for another year trying his hand at farming and raising some cattle. Vallejo offered Bill a Mexican land grant. Pulling up stakes once more, he moved to a place later named Washington in Yolo county, near the Sacramento River. Bill became acquainted with John A. Sutter. Sutter hired Gordon to build a mill that was operated by horsepower. Bill Gordon had to cross the river by canoe each day from his home on the other side of the river. When the mill was completed, Sutter paid him

with 42 head of cattle. It was at this Cache Creek location, that the Bear Flaggers came to eat and rest.

In 1862, Bill's son, William (also called Bill) moved to Gordon Valley. Bill, the younger, farmed 1,200 acres of land that was part of his father's Mexican grant that Vallejo had helped him to secure.

The son aided in the valley's development, assisting to construct roads, organized the Gordon school district and served as trustee for many years. Unlike his father, he stayed put.

References: Solano and Napa Counties, California with Biographical Sketches: History by Tom Gregory and other well known writers. Men of the California Bear Flag Revolt and their Heritage: Barbara R. Warner

Thanks to Bert Hughes of the Vacaville Heritage Council for his untiring efforts to furnish material and photos.

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COURTESY PHOTO

In 1862, Bill Gordon Jr. moved to Gordon Valley.

Capt. Waterman appeases wife by naming Cordelia after her

It had been a wonderful and exciting adventure for the three young ladies to tour, then ride the work train down from the rock quarries at Thomasson's (also known as Nelson) Hill in Cordelia.

On that fateful July 1909 afternoon, the engine was backing down the hill with two cars of paving blocks ahead of it. Somehow, the engineer lost control of the locomotive and it tore down the grade at a terrific speed.

The young ladies were told to jump. Miss Minna Mangels was the first to try to get out of her perilous position. When she jumped from the runaway train, she landed in an oil



Nancy Dingler

Solano in retrospect

pit, fracturing her leg and striking the back of her neck on a rail.

The other two ladies, Miss Mary Hall, a school teacher at Cordelia, and Miss Hazel Hall, avoided the oil

pit, but still suffered severe cuts and bruises.

When Minna was picked up, she was unconscious and covered with oil. Her hair and clothing were matted with the fluid.

On reaching the bottom of the hill, the car of blocks collided with a steam shovel, which was left there to be taken to the top. Not much damage was done to it, as the speed of the locomotive had somewhat slackened before coming to rest against the steam shovel.

Had the young ladies remained on the engine until the rock car hit the steam shovel, they probably would have escaped without any injuries.

At last report from her home in

Green Valley, Miss Mangels was getting along nicely. She had regained consciousness and was resting easily.

As exciting as the occasional runaway train, horse or carriage may have made life, Cordelia was booming with the excitement surrounding a railroad shipping point. Local farmers could bring their crops, millers and their flour; the quarry could bring their cut stone, which found its way around the world.

Originally the site was named Bridgeport, which was the business hub for Green Valley. Bridgeport was settled in 1853 by Capt. Robert H. Waterman.

See **Waterman**, Page **C3**

He chose to name the town after one in Connecticut. When the post office was established around 1869, the post office insisted on a less common name.

Cordelia was chosen in honor of Waterman's wife. For a time, maps listed both Bridgeport and Cordelia. When the Wells Fargo agency was established in 1880, Cordelia became the only name on maps.

Capt. Waterman was known for being tough, and some say, brutal in his treatment of his crew and others who worked for him. He was known as "Bully" Waterman.

It is also rumored that he mistreated his wife. In 1852, Waterman was brought to trial for a voyage that resulted in the beatings and deaths of several seamen, which included an attempted mutiny.

The feelings among the common seaman and long-shoremen in San Francisco ran so high, that a thousand of them gathered in front of Alsop and Co., consignee of the ship, threatening to hang Waterman. The Committee of Vigilance (vigilantes) assembled and marched into the mob, dispersing it.

The notoriety of the trials forced Capt. Waterman to give up his sea career. In August of 1853, he purchased an undivided one-third interest in approximately 30 square miles of land in Suisun Valley. He now began a successful second career as a real estate dealer and farmer.

David Andrew Weir, in his book, "The Fabulous Captain Waterman," relates how in

Cordelia was chosen in honor of Waterman's wife. For a time, maps listed both Bridgeport and Cordelia. When the Wells Fargo agency was established in 1880, Cordelia became the only name on maps.

June of 1856, Waterman's wife, Cordelia, felt that the name of Great Jones Street on the Fairfield map was named after a Cynthia Jones, a woman in New York with whom her husband was acquainted.

Waterman denied the connection, saying that the street was named after Jones' father, Judge Samuel Jones. To appease his wife, Waterman agreed to name something after her. The very next morning, June 14, Waterman, his wife Cordelia, Sam Martin and C.P. Reeves drove over to Bridgeport and, in a short ceremony, changed the name to Cordelia.

Whether this story is credible or not, it has persisted in historic lore.

Pearl Fowler in 1985 wrote about her life as a child growing up in Cordelia. "There was always a center of interest in my young world. It was the old yellow depot with the post office opposite and the general store. The store had groceries and rows of glass jars with candy in them. It had a pot-bellied stove, a coffee grinder, stacks of blue overalls and bolts of calico. It had a warehouse joining, filled with sacks of beans, rice, sugar, etc.

"Tall milk cans were perched beside the depot and the boys lounged around them until the train came in. Then the cans were put on a plat-

form and wheeled into a freight car. There were three hotels and four saloons.

"The railroad track ran through the center of Cordelia and it is still there for freight trains. There was a graveled road on each side of the track. The sidewalks were graveled and narrow.

"There was a row of houses along the graveled walks. Most of them had white picket fences and luscious gardens and grape arbors.

"There were fields in back of the houses for a cow and chickens and a pig pen hidden. There was Dunkers meat market, a saloon side by side and a dance hall upstairs where many dances and meetings were held.

"Also, a small white Methodist Church and later a Lutheran Church. I attended a two-room grammar school with eight grades, which I went through."

Fowler relates how they went by train from the Cordelia depot to Suisun, then walked the rest of the way to Armijo High School. They named the train, "the old plug." The Armijo she attended is now the old courthouse at Union Avenue and Texas Street.

She also tells of how the valley was covered with vineyards. The valley was indeed green. Pearl ended her nostalgic memories with a portion of a poem

that she had sung in school:

*"When all the world is young lad
And all the trees are green. . . .
God grant you find one face there
You loved when all was young."*

Note: Daphne Nixon of Cordelia is heading a group of interested historians to preserve Waterman's frontier town from destruction by the possible realignment of Interstate 680. Most, if not all, of the historic structures are on the state's register of historic properties.

Let's hope this designation is enough to save Old Cordelia, an important part of Solano County's heritage, which is shrinking at an alarming rate.

References: *California Office of Historic Preservation Map of the land of Suysun (sic); The Property of A.A. Ritchie "Bad Accident at Thomasson," Solano Republican, July 30, 1909; Solano Historian, December 1985, "Cordelia, When I Was Young" by Pearl Fowler; Solano Historian, May 1987, "Green Valley," a reprint from Solano Republican, April 10, 1879; Solano Historian, December 1987, "The Trials of Captain Waterman" by Matthew Fountain; California Place Names - Edwin G. Gudda, 1969 (pp 74); Cordelia Area Home Owners Association Newsletter, Vol. 1, October 2000; "The Heritage Collection: Sites, Structures and History of Fairfield and Vicinity," compiled by The Heritage Society of West Central Solano for the City of Fairfield, 1999.*

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How the area of Cordelia was named

CORDELIA — Behind this dateline lies the heart of a jealous woman.

Cordelia Sterling, the bride of Fairfield founder Captain Robert Henry Waterman, is the namesake of that little part of the city with the freeway fun center.

According to local historian David Weir, Cordelia looked over Waterman's shoulder one day in 1856 when the captain was mapping the streets of Fairfield, the community he named after his native city in Connecticut.

He took particular notice of the street called Great Jones, named for a New York boulevard where Judge Samuel Jones and his daughter, Cynthia, resided when Waterman was still a young captain.

Waterman and the judge had been good friends, and Waterman and Cynthia were somewhat more than friends when the captain finally married Cordelia, sister of his former boss, Captain John Sterling.

Indeed, rumors persist Waterman and Cynthia persisted in their close friendship well into the captain's marriage.

When Cordelia noticed Water-

man had named a street in his new town of Fairfield in honor of the Joneses, she demanded equal time.

"I see you haven't forgotten your old sweetheart Cynthia Jones and have immortalized her memory by naming a Fairfield street Great Jones," Cordelia pouted, according to Weir.

"For heaven's sake," Waterman replied, "you know mighty well Judge Jones was one of my best friends, and it was in his honor I named this street in Fairfield."

"Look," he added, "I have named an entire town for your birthplace, Bridgeport, Conn. See, out here six miles that nice little village of Bridgeport is bound to become a real city in time."

Cordelia, however, insisted in having the entire city named exclusively for her. And he did.

However, some of the earlier settlers, reports Weir, never got used to that title.



This old painting depicts Cordelia Waterman at age 35. Her husband named the community south of Fairfield for her to mend a marital rift.

The intrepid families of Vaca and Pena

By Nancy Dingler
DAILY REPUBLIC CORRESPONDENT

As traffic whizzes by on Interstate 80, few are aware that behind the fence, shaded by trees, still clearly visible on the east side of the freeway, from Fairfield, approaching Vacaville, is perhaps the oldest building in the entire county.



Nancy Dingler

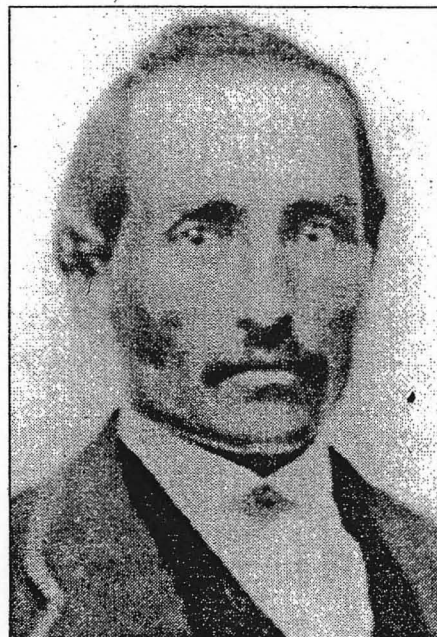
Solano in retrospect

Built in 1842 by Juan Felipe Pena, the house has withstood weather, time, neglect and vandalism. The 2-foot-thick adobe blocks were formed on site from our "famous" local

clay soil, straw and water, then allowed to bake in the hot sun until ready for the awaiting walls.

Juan and his family are believed to have hauled by oxen or mule teams, from Napa, the redwood that was hand-hewn for the joists that support the thatched roof and window and door lintels. The entire building's dimensions, when finished, were 18 by 50 feet.

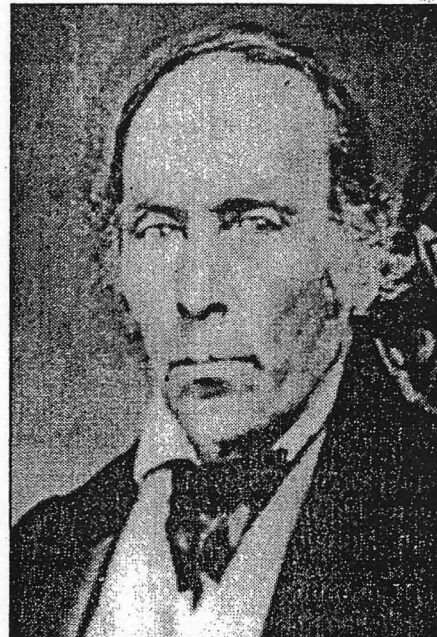
There were no stoves or fireplace in the house, and certainly, no plumbing. As was the custom in the early households, the cooking was done outside under a thatched shelter. Water had to be hauled in a bucket and was supplied by a hand-dug well with a "luxurious" hand pump.



Juan Manuel Vaca, left, and Juan Felipe Pena.

Sometime around the 1880s, the adobe was modernized and enlarged by encasing the entire building in wood sheathing and frame extension. New wood walls were carried about 3 feet beyond present (and original) portico columns and a frame annex was added at the north end. Kitchen facilities were installed.

By the 1950s, the old house began to deteriorate. It stood as an abandoned ruin in a meadow overgrown with weeds, neglected trees and shrubbery. Old adobe walls, for so many years protected by the encased



COURTESY PHOTOS/Vacaville Heritage Council

wood siding, became exposed. The south wall collapsed. Concerned members of the Solano County Historical Society undertook a campaign to save the Pena Adobe.

When Juan Felipe Pena and Juan Manuel Vaca, with their families in tow, headed for California from Santa Fe, N.M., they were seeking a better life. Juan Felipe brought his wife, Isabella Gonsalves and their six children. Juan Manuel had lost his wife in 1839. The widower was accompanied by their eight children.

The intrepid families followed the

Old Spanish Trail that terminated at Pueblo de Los Angeles, arriving in 1841. Upon their arrival in Southern California, they were convinced by Mariano Vallejo to settle in the fertile Lagoon Valley.

Part of their agreement with Vallejo was that the families were required to build houses, plant trees and pasture livestock. Both the Pena's and Vaca's built homes, only the Pena's adobe remains.

The "two" Juans having satisfied Vallejo's requirements, were granted 10 square leagues of the Rancho Los Puntos. Ten square leagues amounted to 44,384 acres. This huge territory encompassed all of Lagoon Valley and stretched into what is now Yolo County.

During the 1840s, both families engaged in cattle ranching. Hides and tallow were the principal source of trade and income. It has been speculated that they hauled the hides and tallow by ox cart to landings along the sloughs of Suisun Bay.

The families also engaged the few remaining Native Americans to serve as ranch hands, cowboys and servants. The Vacas and Penas cultivated orchards and gardens near their homes.

This was a tumultuous time in California's history. In just five short years after their arrival, the Bear Flag revolt occurred, in which Vallejo, his brother and their families were taken to Sutter's Fort from Sonoma as captives, care of General Charles Fremont and Kit Carson.

Many of the "Bear Flaggers" objected to the treatment by Fremont of the captives and made sure that the Vallejo families were accorded some protection on their way to John Sutter's fort. One of the stops along the way was at Pena's Adobe, where they were treated with respect, quantities of food and liquid refreshment.

In 1847, Americans Albert Lyon, John Patton Sr. and Jr., along with J.P. Willis and Clay Long, arrived in the Vaca Valley. In April of 1849, Vaca decided to sell a half-league of land between Alamo and Ulatis creeks for \$8,000 to Albert Lyon and the Pattons.

On Aug. 21, 1850, Vaca deeded 9 square miles to another new arrival, William McDaniel, for \$3,000 to

establish the town of Vacaville. Part of the deal was that McDaniel was to establish 1,055 lots.

Under the new Republic of California, nothing changed as far as landownership, but when California went for statehood in 1850, as the 39th state, suddenly the Mexican land grants were being assaulted in the courts. Rancho owners were forced to engage in protracted and costly legal battles in an effort to gain confirmation of their claims.

Settlers by the hundreds moved into the rich valleys on a squatter premise that until the Spanish or Mexican grants were officially validated, they would seize the land. Although the Vacas and Penas had to contend with these vexing problems,

they were more fortunate than many of their countrymen. Confirmation was acknowledged by the United States in 1858 for the 10 square leagues of Rancho Los Puntos.

Adjustments had to be made to the original boundary lines of the grant, due to the settler problem. The boundary lines were finally established as a twisted and elongated configuration on the maps of Solano County. Southern boundaries enclosed most of Lagoon Valley, while northern lines reached almost to Davis.

Upon having his claim confirmed by the U.S. courts, Pena deeded much of his land to his children. Daughter Nestora received about 1,000 acres and the ranch house. In 1881 Nestora

married Jesus Tapia Rivera. The Riveras had no children.

A niece, Maria Dolores Pena (afterward married to John P. Lyon) had lived with Nestora and was deeded the land and old adobe in 1918. Nestora is believed to have been 83 or 84 when she passed away in 1922.

Descendants of the Vacas and Penas still live in Solano County. More than 60 were on hand to sign a guest register at the time Pena Adobe was restored and the park was dedicated on June 2, 1967.

Note: Due to vandals and thefts of the Adobe's contents, the building is no longer open to the public. There seem to be no funds to provide a park ranger or docent, even on a limited basis. Currently, the only way to view

the interior is to make arrangements through Rollie Simmons, parks superintendent for Vacaville. Phone 469-6500. It is really a shame that after all the efforts by the Solano Historical Society to find the funds to restore this early part of California history, that the public can not easily view the remaining artifacts.

References: Vacaville: The Heritage of a California Community by Ronald H. Limbaugh and Walter A. Payne (1978); Pena Adobe Park Informational brochure, Vacaville Parks Department. Interview with Bob Allen, Solano Historical Society & Vacaville Heritage Council.

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Wolfskill Name Recalls Memories of West's Pioneer Days

By JOYCE QUARRY

So many people asked me the question, "Have you interviewed Reed Wolfskill yet?" that I decided to high-tail it down to Manka's Corners and search out the Solano County pioneer, rancher and ex-postmaster.

Driving up the quiet lane to his ranch home in Suisun Valley was like passing through fairyland — the apricot trees were profuse with pink blossoms. In front of the picturesquely situated white frame house with green trim were yellow daffodils and an enormous deep pink blossoming peach tree, breathtaking in its depth of rich color.

From hospitable M. R. "Reed" Wolfskill, I gleaned many an interesting fact about Solano County, Suisun Valley, and Mr. Wolfskill's relatives who helped carve the history of the area, and even California.

Family History

Hearing him tell about the adventures of the Wolfskills was more exciting than watching a western on television.

Imagine swimming your horse across Carquinez Straits to reach the other side!

Imagine riding from Los Angeles to northern California on horseback, changing horses at the missions along the way!

Imagine exploring northern California and finding an area near Winters where you decided to settle — a wilderness filled with grizzly bears and other wild animals! Indians too, but friendly ones.

Think of the challenge of watching your land, 40,000 acres you purchased from the Mexican government (owners of the state of California in its early history) in the form of a land grant, change from a wilderness to rich fruit orchards. And through your own hard work!

All these things were done by Reed Wolfskill's great-uncle, John Reed Wolfskill, the first white settler in Solano County, in 1841.

His daughter later donated part of this rich land to the University of California for horticultural experimentation. It is called the Wolfskill Experimental Station.

And John's brother William "Bill" Wolfskill! What a life he led. With fellow fur trappers, he trapped and traveled his way to Los Angeles. He married a Spanish girl, and received a large land grant from the Mexican government. An interest in horticultural experimenting led him to become the first California orange grower to ship oranges east. He remained in Los Angeles, whereas his brother, John, decided to move northward to settle.

Distant Memento

When Reed and his wife, Nelda, who is every bit as enthusiastic about the Wolfskill family adventures as her husband, traveled to Zion National Park in Utah and stopped at the park museum, whose picture did they see on the wall but Billy's. It seems that Billy and his friend, Jedediah Strong Smith, were fur trappers in Utah's early history.

Reed Wolfskill, a kindly, gray-haired gentleman, unfolded information about his father who settled in Suisun Valley in 1864 and began ranching. Reed commented: "My father became active in local and state politics. A prominent member of the Democratic party, he served on the Democratic county central committee. He was an assemblyman in Sacramento in 1890 and 1891."

Wolfskill laughingly said: "People used to tease me about hanging onto my father's coat when I was a kid and attended political conventions with him. I caught his fervor for politics. I wasn't even able to vote when I became treasurer of the Democratic county Central Committee, at eighteen years old."

City's Origin

When asked about historic facts of Fairfield and Suisun, seventy-two years old Wolfskill good-naturedly related that Fairfield got its name from Captain Waterman, a sea captain who originally hailed from Fairfield, Conn.

Captain Waterman agreed to donate the land around the present site of the Fairfield courthouse if the town were named Fairfield and became the county seat. Local Fairfield resident David Weir has written a book entitled, "That Fabulous Captain Waterman."

Wolfskill, weaving local color into his tales of Suisun said: "I have seen many a change in Fairfield and Suisun in my lifetime. Suisun was the main hub-bub of activity for years. It wasn't until Travis Air Force Base was built that Fairfield really spurted in growth. Fairfield had room to expand, Suisun didn't."

"Do you know that Solano County was named after Chief Solano, the head of a tribe of Suisun Indians? Hence came the name Suisun meaning 'west wind.'"

Historic Suisun was besieged by three fires. It boasted of four hotels at one time in its history. All of them burned down. Mr. and Mrs. Wolfskill showed me pictures of the old Arlington Hotel, a fashionable meeting place in its day.

Wolfskill, continuing to reminisce, said: "A train came to the Suisun railroad station once an hour, so you can see what a railroad mecca it was in the old days."

He brought out some old newspapers. "Let me show you some of the prices in the old days," he said. "Here is a 1940 issue of the Solano Republican. The Solano County Grocery advertises butter at 35 cents a pound, ground round at 24 cents, and cornered pork at 10½ cents a pound."

In an even older paper, issued in the year 1900, the Suisun Candy Factory sported a fancy advertisement. Dr. Warner's Perfection corsets were advertised at prices ranging from 50 cents to \$2.25 at a downtown Suisun Store.

Wolfskill told about the S. S. Solano — a boat which ferried horses, buggies and people from Benicia to Port Costa. At that time there was no such thing as a bridge or ferry.

The valley rancher said: "We bought our horses, buggies and surries in Suisun. From our home here on Gordon Valley Road, it took us one and one-half hours to get to Suisun by horse and buggy. We had to travel through a lot of mud. Even the kids in those days had their own buggies."

"When I was a small boy, we had no mail, paper delivery nor telephones in the valley. When a neighboring rancher went to town he would return loaded down with mail and papers for many families. A postoffice finally opened at Manka's Corners in 1896. It wasn't until 1903 or 1904 that a rural route mail delivery was established in the valley."

Grain to Fruit

The Reed Wolfskill ranch now abounds with apricot, pear, peach and prune trees. "But in the early days," Mr. Wolfskill commented, "the whole countryside was planted with wheat, grain, barley and corn. We cultivated our land with four and six horse teams. We didn't have tractors then. It wasn't until the 1880's that the ranchers began planting fruit trees which were more profitable."

"Dove and quail were attracted to the wheat fields by the thousands. The birds were so tame that we fed them in our front yards."

Remembering fun times, Wolfskill said: "Don't think we kids didn't have our good times. We used to hitch up our horses, pick up our best girl, and go to the dances in Cordelia. We'd dance all night to an eight or ten piece orchestra."

"The whole valley would turn out when a dance was held at the Union Hall or a May Day picnic at Clayton's Grove. We may not have had modern day entertainment such as television, but we had lots of good old fashioned fun."

"A big event of the week," he continued "was going to the Rockville Church on Sunday. The ministers were blood and thunder Southern Methodists in those days. A ramp was built by the side of the church. The ladies stepped off the ramp right into the buggies so they wouldn't get their dresses dirty."

Reed met his wife, Nelda, at the Suisun Valley school where both were students in the one-room schoolhouse. Their parents had been close friends for years. Nelda's grandparents, Louisa and Calvin Reams, settled in the valley in 1855. Nelda and Reed were married at Nelda's mother's home forty-three years ago.

The newlyweds set up house-keeping at the Wolfskill family homestead. They moved to their present home thirty-one years ago. Mr. Wolfskill said: "Let me tell you of an interesting twist of fate. My father at one time sold some of his land holdings. This ranch we live on was included in the sale."

"The purchaser decided after a short while to move to Calistoga, so I bought the land back. We have since added onto the original five rooms of the ranch home."

Ranching became Wolfskill's livelihood. He comments on his profession, saying: "We have had lots of lean years in the ranching business. It is full of ups and downs. Frost or rain can destroy an entire year's crop."

Suisun Postmaster

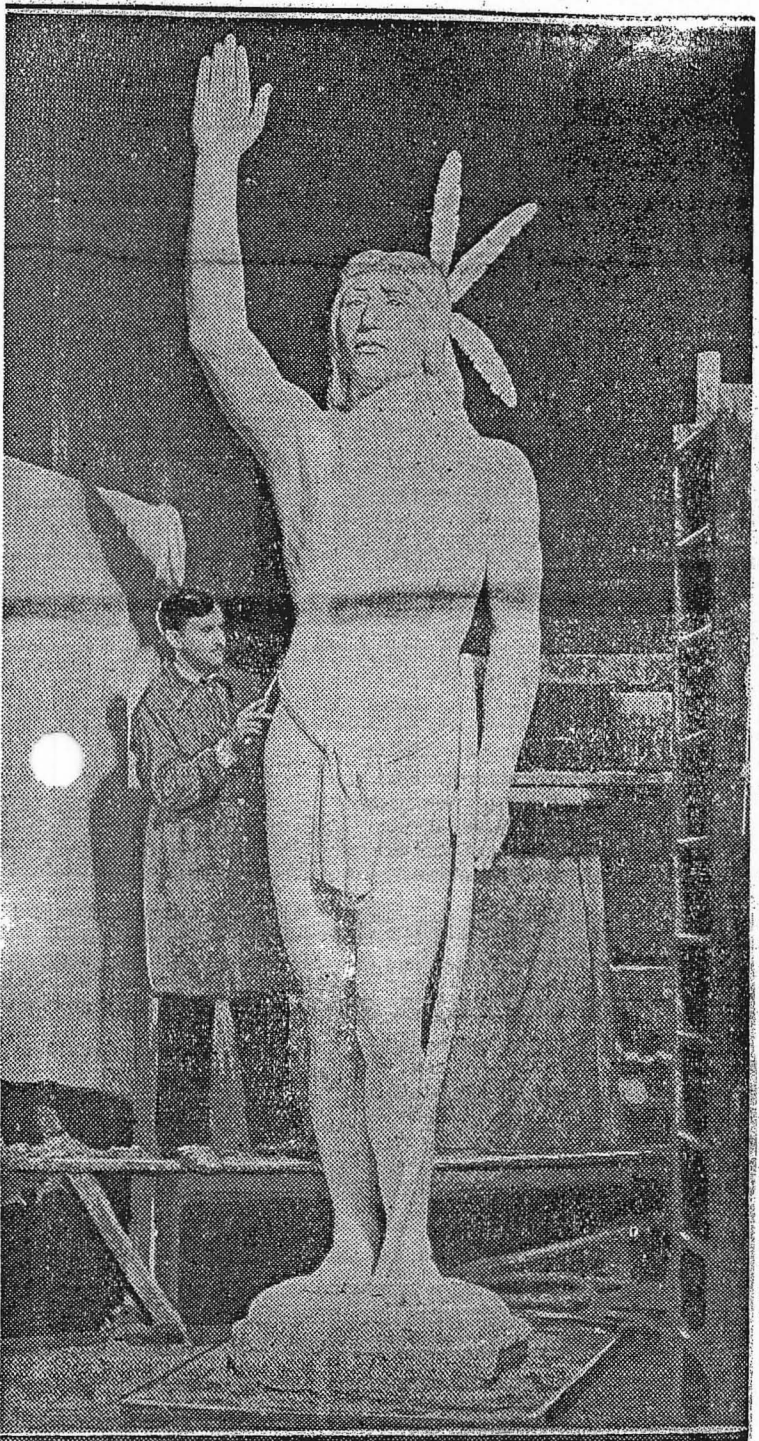
In addition to ranching, Wolfskill served as postmaster of Suisun City for 17 years, more consecutive years than any postmaster since 1856.

He joined in community activities. He has been a member of Vallejo Lodge No. 559, BPOE since 1913; a member of Solano Parlor No. 39 in Suisun; Native Sons of the Golden West; past president of the Fairfield-Suisun Rotary Club; a member of the Farm Bureau, and active in the Suisun Valley Fruit Growers Association.

He is a past vice-president of the Historical Society and maintains an active interest in its activities. He served as school trustee of the Suisun Valley School for eighteen years.

TO ENDURE FOREVER

STATUE OF CHIEF SOLANO
BEING MADE IN OAKLAND



The 12-foot statue of Chief Solano, head of the Suisunne Tribe of Indians, for whom Solano county was named, is soon to be erected near Fairfield by the State Park Commission. It is being made by William Gordon Huff, young Berkeley sculptor, and is being cast in bronze in an Oakland foundry.

After more than seven years of patient waiting and indomitable perseverance on the part of Massasoit Tribe of Red Men of Fairfield, Dr. H. V. Clymer and other prominent Solano county citizens, who have faithfully and courageously interested themselves in the project, a beautiful bronze monument is soon to be erected to the memory of Chief Solano.

The exact date of the unveiling and dedication ceremonies has not yet been determined since it has been found necessary to advance the date from April until some time in May, owing to unavoidable circumstances, it was revealed this week by Dr. Clymer, representing the local lodge as chief committeeman. But within a short time, it is announced, the date of the big ceremonial will be named, and participating in the gigantic event will be Governor James Rolph, Jr., State Senator Thomas McCormack, Assemblyman Ernest C. Crowley, and many other men of high rank, as well as Chieftains from every Red Men lodge in the state.

STATUE BEING MOULDED

In the Oakland foundry the massive statue of Chief Solano, noted leader of the Suisunne tribe of Indians, moulded by William Gordon Huff, young Berkeley sculptor, on orders of the State Park Commission, is slowly being translated from plaster of paris into enduring bronze.

When completed the magnificent statue will be erected on the hill overlooking the beautiful Suisun Valley, four and one half miles west of Fairfield, and a few rods north of the Sacramento Highway. The statue will be erected on the pinnacle of the knoll of a three-acre tract of land which is a part of the Mrs. Jennie Neitzell tract, a spot where Chief Solano, during his lifetime, often went to scan the region he so proudly dominated.

Solano, noted throughout the West for his intelligence and his friendliness to the whites, was a physical giant, standing six feet seven inches tall.

FRIENDLY GESTURE

Sculptor Huff has fashioned his neaments into a monument 12 feet

tall, depicting the chief with right hand upraised in a gesture of friendship with the white settlers, his hunting bow carried at rest in his left hand. The statue will stand on an eight-foot native rock foundation, and can be seen from a long distance from either direction.

Erection of the monument is being handled by the State Park Commission under authority granted by the State Legislature. Huff was chosen to perform the task in a competition held by the Park Commission, in which sculptors from every part of the state participated. The intricate task of casting the statue will be completed within about 30 days, according to information just revealed.

TO SET DEDICATION DATE

When the bronze figure is completed the Park Commission together with the sponsoring Red Men tribe, will set a date for the ceremony of dedication, which according to Dr. Clymer will be during the month of May, with a big pageant and will be one of the greatest events in Solano county history, with every Red Men lodge in the state of California participating.

The erection of the Chief Solano monument was made possible through an act of the State Legislature. The sight, which cost \$608 was paid for by the local lodge of Red Men. The state appropriated \$5,000 for the erection of the monument through the efforts of Senator Thomas McCormack and Assemblyman Ernest C. Crowley and in addition to the above amount the Solano County Board of Supervisors appropriated an additional \$25,000 which money was used by Massasoit tribe of Fairfield in the purchase of the monument hill.

Huff, the sculptor, is a relative of Mrs. Russell Wright of Vacaville, and has visited here on several occasions. Being the most noted sculptor in this section of the country, Huff was chosen to fashion and erect the soldier monument in front of the court house here, as well as practically all monuments and bronze work in the state. After a month of final polishing and preparation, the old chief will be ready to make his "last stand."

2/15/34

Chief Solano: The rest of the story

The following responds to information supplied in a recent guest column on Chief Solano:

The person known in California history as Francisco Solano, and later, as Chief Solano, was a California Indian of the Suisun tribelet of the Patwin language group within the Penutian linguistic family of California's Central Valley.

The Patwins inhabited the area now covered by Colusa, Yolo and Solano counties.

The Suisuns, numbering less than 500 souls, occupied Suisun Valley in present Solano County.

Francisco Solano was born about 1800 in Suisun Valley. He was brought to Mission Dolores

— in present-day San Francisco — where he was baptized on July 24, 1810, two months after the central Suisun village had been destroyed by a Spanish military expedition. He was then given the Christian name Francisco Solano. His personal Indian name was Sina.

The term "Sem Yeto," usually cited as his Indian name, is actually a descriptive epithet meaning "brave hand," which was attributed to him at an unknown time and place.

The origin of the title "Chief Solano" is also an enigma; it was probably given to him by his patron at Sonoma, Comandante Mariano G. Vallejo.

Solano spent 1810 through 1823 as an Indian convert at Mission Dolores. In 1824 he was included in the 602 Mission Indians who were transferred from the three missions (Dolores, San Jose and San Rafael) to work and live at the newly established Mission of San Francisco Solano in Sonoma.

From 1824 through 1834 he served at this mission as a head Indian with the title of "alcalde."

With the secularization of the Sonoma Mission in 1834 and the establishment of the Pueblo of Sonoma by Comandante Vallejo, Solano came under the control of Vallejo between 1834 and 1846. He served Vallejo as a labor boss in charge of ex-Mission Indian converts, and more recently captured Indians who were put to work on Vallejo's projects.

He also served as head of Vallejo's Indian auxiliary troop.

Vallejo commissioned him in 1836 a captain in the Mexican Army. In this capacity, he was active in Vallejo's punitive campaigns against hostile and unsubdued Indian tribes from 1834 to 1843. Solano returned part-time to Suisun Valley in 1836 to occupy the former Mission branch farm and pasture lands, which he then received as a personal grant from Vallejo in 1837.

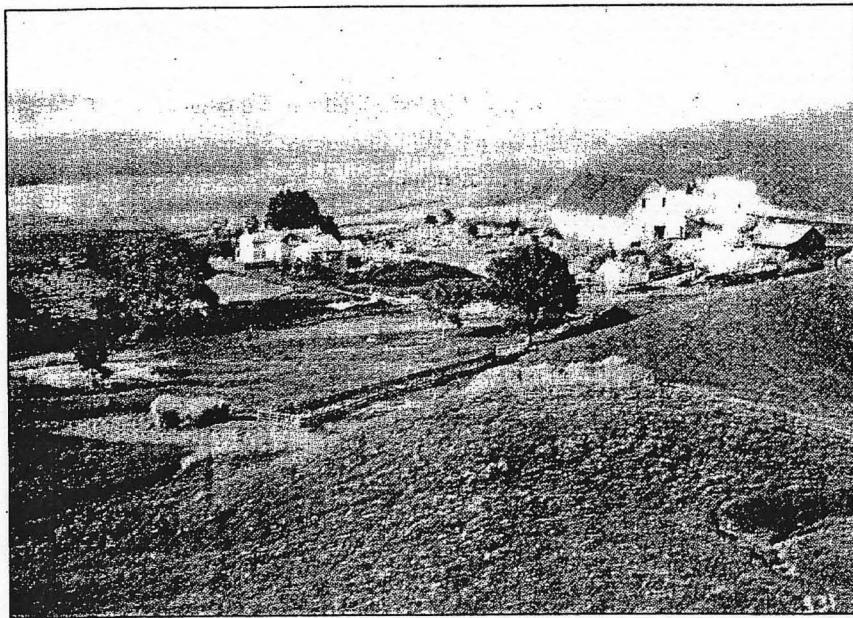
He brought with him a labor force of ex-Mission Indian farmhands to work his Suisun Rancho until 1842, when he sold the Rancho to Vallejo and returned to Sonoma.

Solano disappeared from Sonoma in 1846 after the seizure of the pueblo by the Bear Flag party. He is reported to have reappeared in 1850 in Sonoma and was seen thereafter at the Suisun Rancho, where he died in the fall of that year.

He was buried nearby at a spot now on the campus of Solano College, where a memorial plaque marks the vicinity of the site.

M. Clyde Low
Fairfield

Man behind Rush Ranch: cattle rancher, sheriff, state senator



COURTESY PHOTO

Hiram Rush raised 3,000 cattle on his ranch.

Rarely indeed, do we find a character, that through all phases of life, more especially the successful portion, retains unsullied its original fineness of principle."

Wow! Reading these opening praises of Benjamin F. Rush in the "History of Solano and Napa Counties," I had to know more about the man who warranted this accolade. The unbridled praise continues for several more sentences before the facts of Rush's background and deeds are told.

Benjamin Rush is the Rush of the locally famed ranch located on



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Grizzly Island Road. Today, the ranch belongs to the Solano County Farmland and Open Space Foundation and is open to the public daily from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m.

The center offers docent tours and special events, and has a small education center. A

blacksmith demonstrates his craft every third Saturday from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. For more information, call 428-7580.

Benjamin (nowhere can I find the use of "Ben") was born Oct. 12, 1852 at Fourteen Mile House, Sacramento County. His parents, Hiram and Sarah, had been part of the 1849 Gold Rush; however, instead of panning for gold, they drove a herd of cattle from Indiana.

Hiram was quite the entrepreneur, in that he allowed the cattle to forage in the lush pasturage while building

See **Dingler**, Page **C2**

the hotel, Fourteen Mile House. As the herd of cattle increased, Hiram had to turn his attention back to their care, while Sarah took charge of the hotel.

When Benjamin was born, Sarah and Hiram decided to move to a more healthful climate, settling into the Potrero Hills of southwestern Solano County. Hiram became one of the most prosperous men of the county with the ever-increasing cattle herd. At one time, it was estimated that he had 3,000 cattle, several hundred horses and owned 51,000 acres, some located in Monterey County.

When Benjamin was 13, the family decided to move to San Francisco. Benjamin and his sisters, Eleanor, Sarah, Mary and Kate, received the finest education that was available in both San Francisco and Oakland. Benjamin entered the Oakland Military Academy, and when he finished there, he attended Heald's Business College of San Francisco. After Heald's, Benjamin went to work for Titcomb and Williams of San Francisco as a bookkeeper.

In early December of 1869, Hiram was crossing a creek in his buggy, when he was thrown from the vehicle violently. The freak accident killed him instantly. Hiram was 60 years old when he died. The young Benjamin was only 17.

Sarah took over managing affairs until Benjamin was 23. He quit his position with Titcomb and Williams to take over running of the ranch and other properties.

A year later, in 1876, Benjamin married Miss Anna M. McKean, a native of Astoria, Ore. Unfortunately, I was not able to find out any information as to when or how he had met Anna. They eventually had seven children.

Benjamin continued to improve and expand the ranch, as well as the land holdings that his father had initiated. In partnership with C.F.D. Hastings, of Hastings ranch, he began breeding celebrated horses.

One of his horses, Aerolite, as a 3-year-old, sold for \$8,000 in the 1880s! Along the way, he purchased a 700-acre fruit ranch in the Suisun valley, expanding the peaches, apricots, prunes and pear tree plantings from the original 40



COURTESY PHOTO

Benjamin Rush was the sheriff for Solano County in 1895.

acres that already were producing fruit.

Benjamin became interested in local politics, and to that end, he assisted for a time in the management and publication of the Solano County Republican newspaper. Then in 1895, Benjamin became Solano County sheriff. He served in that post for four years before running for state senator.

During his tenure as sheriff, one of the more interesting criminal counterfeiting cases was investigated. Scattered, infrequent reports had been made by hunters out in the Suisun hills of seeing an apparition of a man's head popping out of the earth. The sight had been frightening, but easily dismissed, what with the early morning shot of warming whiskey.

Then there were the counterfeit coins that were turning up throughout the county. As investigations were launched, it was determined that the coins seemed to be passed during games of chance or in bars. The counterfeiter's capture came dramatically when John Cavanaugh and his brother, proprietors of a saloon near the north Vallejo railroad depot, caught the culprit "red-handed."

The Cavanaugh brothers had heard that "funny money" in the form of quarters, half dollars and dollar coins were being passed in the area. On this particular Saturday afternoon in early 1895, John was offered a quarter from a man

who called himself Montifino, in payment for his drink.

John didn't think it felt right, suspecting it was counterfeit. Montifino loudly insisted the coin was good and bet John \$5 that it was the genuine article. Cavanaugh quickly cut the coin in half with his knife and made a citizen's arrest. A scuffle ensued before the Cavanaugh brothers managed to subdue and tie up Montifino while summoning the Sheriff's deputies.

Assistant Secret Service Agent Harris discovered that Montifino was really Giovanni Montelbano, a career criminal. Montelbano had dug out a cave in the Suisun hills, where he was striking his counterfeit coins. Giovanni would approach his secret cave cautiously late at night and leave before sunrise, so no one would see him. Obviously, he was spotted on a few occasions coming and going by hunters, who did indeed witness a "head in the ground."

Benjamin Rush won the election to the state Senate by a landslide in 1904. He ran unopposed again in 1908. Among his achievements, he was one of the members of the committee to select the location of the state agricultural farm at Davisville, securing a tract of 800 acres for the agricultural department of the state university.

He was active in securing the necessary funds for Napa State Hospital and the Yountville veterans' home. Indeed, Benjamin F. Rush did retain unsullied his original fineness of principle.

References: "History of Solano and Napa Counties," by Tom Gregory and others (1912); "History of Solano County," Wood, Alley & Co. (1879) "Counterfeiter's Secret Suisun Cave," by Jerry Bowen, *Vacaville Reporter* (June 17) "Bear gave Grizzly Island New Name" by Sabine Goerke-Shrode, *Vacaville Reporter*, June 24; "The Forest Next Door" by Dana Perrigan, *Vacaville Reporter* (Aug. 12, 1992) "The Man Behind the Rush Ranch - Benjamin Franklin Rush" by Tim Farmer, *Fairfield Daily Republic* (July, 1991) "Great Landslide for Republicans", *Solano Republican* (Nov. 11, 1904).

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The long journey to California in 1846

In the quiet shade and shadows of the pioneer Rockville cemetery stand two stone monuments.

Inscribed on the smaller rough-hewn, mossy natural headstone is the name Alford. Placed nearby is a little "stone house" quarried from the same stone that makes up the cemetery chapel.

Weather and time have not been kind to the inscription, for it is well-worn. This is the grave of a small child, the first to be buried at the "new" cemetery.

The tragic irony of this small grave is that the 5 acres, donated in 1856 for the chapel and cemetery, were given by the parents, not knowing that their 3-year-old daughter, Sarah, would be the first occupant.

Landy and Sarah Alford decided to come west, lured by the promise of California around 1846. "Jumping off places" for westward bound were Independence, Council Bluffs and St. Joseph, Mo.

The Alfords likely decided on Independence, Mo., where many families were putting together wagon trains, including the ill-fated Donner party. It is here where they met seasoned frontiersmen Nathan and



Nancy Dingler
Solano in retrospect

Roswell Barbour.

Sparks evidently flew between the Alford's daughter Nancy and Nathan Barbour, because on May 9 they were married. Shortly after the union, the families set forth on the arduous journey to California. Nancy and Nathan would spend their honeymoon on dusty, as well as muddy trails, weathering hardships most would not consider.

According to research by Christie Barbour as told by Tom Barbour in the December 2000 issue of *The Solano Historian*, there were a large number of family groups starting out from Independence on May 11. George Harlan of Michigan brought 26 people and 11 wagons, each painted with its owner's name.

Samuel Young of Tennessee via Missouri, had two wagons, 12 yoke of oxen, four cows and some heifers, a pair of mules, an extra horse and a light carriage for his pregnant wife. George and Jacob Donner each had three wagons.

Mixed in with the families were single men. One of them was Bluford K. Thompson, also known as "Hell-roaring Thompson." He was described as "a coarse, profane, reckless fellow, a gambler by profession, with some pretensions to gentlemanly manners when sober."

There was also a celebrity of sorts on the train, in the form of Lilburn Boggs. He was a western trader and former governor of Missouri. His claim to fame or infamy was that he had loosed the state militia against the Mormons. Other notables were William Henry Russell, former U.S. Marshal and Edwin Bryant, former editor of the *Louisville Courier*.

Russell was elected captain of the wagon train. He turned out to be an amiable but ineffective leader.

The train consisted of 63 wagons, 119 men, 59 women, 110 children, 58,484 pounds of breadstuffs (flour), 38,080 pounds of bacon, 1,065 pounds of gunpowder, 2,557 pounds of lead

shot, 144 guns, (mostly rifles) and 95 pistols. Livestock consisted of 700 cattle and 150 horses.

Jesse Quinn Thornton, one of the emigrants, stated that "the cattle were numerous, fat and strong; the tents new and clean; the food, of good quality and abundant in quantity and variety . . . the mode of travel is light wagons universally drawn by oxen and usually about three yoke to a wagon."

The groups may have started out together, but as the long line of wagons trailed after one another, they would break into smaller groups and vote in and out those that would lead them.

The Alford and Barbour families did not suffer the terrible fate of the Donners, perhaps because on the trail they met James Clyman, a well-known mountain man who was returning to the East. He told the families straight off that he did not like the so-called "Hastings cut-off."

Taking Clyman's advice, the party went by Fort Hall, thus sparing them the rigors and delay of the cut-off, which the Donner party fell victim to, leading them into the Sierras in time for early, heavy snow storms and the

well-known tragedy of death and cannibalism.

Nathan and Nancy arrived with the rest of the family in California some 30 days before the infamous winter storms. It is believed that the party came down the Truckee River, which they crossed some 25 times, then to the North Fork of the American River, then probably to the Johnson Ranch, 40 miles north of Fort Sutter and finally, on Oct. 10, 1846, to Sutter's Fort. According to San Jose history, the group then began to divide after five days of rest, some going to Napa, others to

Santa Clara.

The Alford and Barbours headed for Sonoma. Nathan enlisted to fight in the Mexican War under Gen. Fremont. On his return from the war, in the spring, he along with Landy Alford framed two houses, which they intended to erect on a couple of lots given them for the purpose. While at work on the houses, Thomas O. Larkin, the American consul in Monterey before the war, made them an offer that they could not refuse.

Larkin offered to take both of the houses to Benicia free of

charge to be erected on specified lots in that city. They moved to Benicia in October 1847. Nathan went into the lumber business and built the Solano Hotel in Benicia.

The following year, gold was discovered. The families decided to try their hand at finding a fortune.

Nathan and Nancy, along with their families, traveled to Hangtown (Placerville), mining about \$5,000 in gold. Nancy's health began to fail, so the family returned to Benicia.

On the trip back, they passed through Suisun Valley

and noted that the native grasses grew so tall that a man on horseback could almost disappear.

Believing the valley to be of exceptionally rich soil, they decided to settle on 240 acres. The Landrys followed suit, settling near the Barbours. They became prosperous farmers, growing many varieties of fruit trees.

Nancy Dingler is a Vacaville resident, writer and historian. You can e-mail her at History_Whiz10@yahoo.com.

Louis Mangels began area dynasty

Considerable interest continues in the pioneer families who settled in our valleys. My good friend Naida Thedick, who has lived here since 1937, suggested writing about the Mangels family and especially Lew Mangels, who died July 14.

Sources for the family history are his wife, Leora Mangels, and his cousin, Louis Little. Notably, several members of the family spelled their name differently.

The family history begins with Louis Mangels, who was born in Hamburg, Germany. He came to America in 1876 when he was 14. Although he landed in New York, he did not stay on the East Coast. He came to San Francisco, possibly because of a connection with the Spreckles family. His older sister had married Claus Spreckles.

In San Francisco, he found work as a cooper, making and repairing barrels and casks. He earned \$4 per day, eventually saving money to buy a ranch. The land was north and across from what is now Solano Community College. He paid \$5,000 in gold coin for 400 acres. Mangels planted grapes using shoots from nearby vineyards and started the Solano Winery. What is now an area of homes on the south end of Mangels Road used to be fields of grapes.

Little tells of big family gatherings on the ranch, especially in winter. They raised some livestock and butchered hogs to make sausage, ham and bacon.

Louis Mangels and his wife, Minna, had eight children. Among them was Claus Mangels, who married Ceilia Rohwr. They were Lew's parents. There are still members of the Rohwr family in



B Hancock

Dixon. There were also three Mangels daughters, Lillian O'Neil, Mina McKnight and Lillian Hoffman. All are dead.

At one time, the family holdings included 1,400 acres. All except the hill area have been sold.

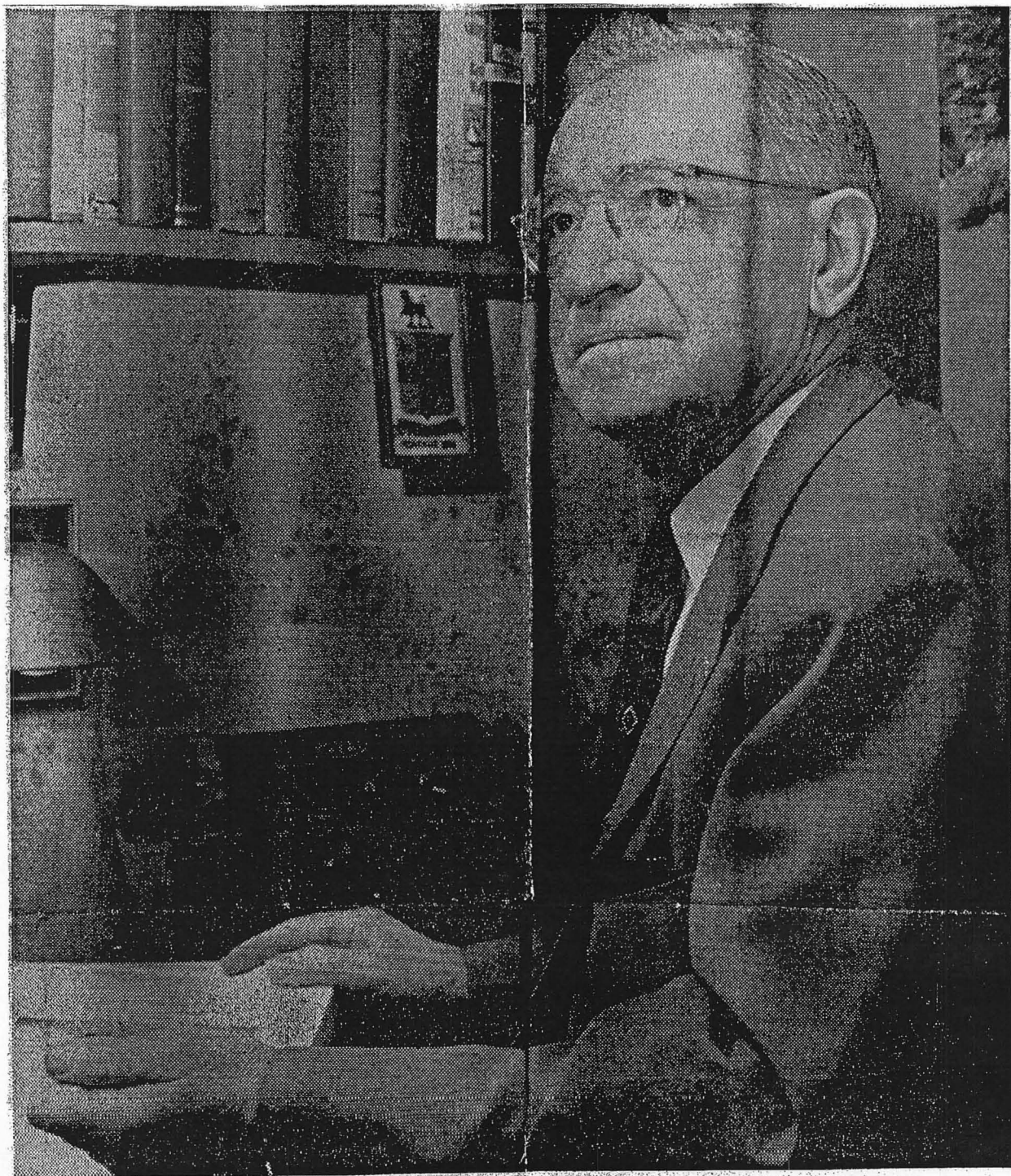
Lew Mangels and Leora McGann married in 1941. Her father was superintendent of the Hunt Brothers cannery located across from the Suisun City railroad station. They have two sons, Gary and John.

The first American Mangels family was somewhat clannish, but subsequent generations were known for friendliness and generosity, Little said. They especially enjoyed their neighbors, the Mayhood and Neitzel families.

We've heard from several people who knew Lew well that he exemplified the best qualities of a good rancher in appearance and disposition. He was particularly admired for his honesty.

Both Lew and Leora were born and lived all their lives here. Son Gary now manages the family properties. Also he lives in the old ranch house built in 1903, which he moved to Morrison Lane.

The Man Behind the Dedication of A New School



DAVID A. WEIR

... A Story Worth Telling

City Pays Tribute To David A. Weir

(Editor's Note: The David A. Weir school is being dedicated today, marking the ninth elementary school in the Fairfield Elementary School District. If a man could be called a historical landmark, then this, certainly, is what David A. Weir would be to Fairfield. Daily Republic correspondent Edith Low interviewed Weir to tell his story.)

By EDITH McLEAN LOW

There is a story worth telling in every man's life and, while the majority of people go unheralded, the time comes when a story must be told. One such story is the life of David Andrew Weir.

Born March 31, 1889 on a farm at Sterling, Colo. Dave Weir has lived his life to its fullest capacity. It has been filled with travel, adventure and hard work; spiced by his devotion to young people and a happy home.

He has distinguished himself as a printer, Linotype operator, editor, publisher and owner of newspapers in four western states: Colorado, Oregon, Nebraska and California. Four of his books have been published, the latest, a biography of Capt. Robert Waterman, founder of Fairfield-Suisun.

At the age of 13, David Weir began his first job when he became a "printer's devil" for the Sterling Democrat. A short time later he switched to the Sterling Advocate, a Republican newspaper, working as a reporter-printer.

The year 1912 was a busy and exciting one for Weir. He was on hand to take the wire and set type for an extra his hometown paper printed when the Titanic sank on April 10, 1912.

This same year he and a professional ball player named Elmer Bevan, established the Sterling Enterprise, which later, under new management, became the Logan County Farm Journal, still publishing.

Moves To Denver

Weir went to Denver, later this same year and worked as an apprentice on the Denver Post. While doing this, young David Weir met Judge Ben B. Lindsay, a world renowned juvenile judge, and helped him organize the first Boy Scout troop in Denver. Scouting in the United States was just two years old at that time. Weir became the assistant scout master.

From Denver, he went to Chicago, where he attended schools and worked for the Chicago Tribune.

Weir, who describes himself as a "very cocky kid," told of a minor episode which, in later years shaped his way of thinking. He had just been fired from a job in the advertising department for trying to tell the boss how to run the newspaper and, as he left the paper, a sports writer stopped him and asked,

"You like sports, don't you?"

"Yes, I do," replied young Weir.

"Well, when someone has the ball, you do your best and run interference for him, because someday you're going to have the ball and be damn glad for someone running interference for you."

Weir realized many times later the full significance of that phrase and never forgot those words, for the young sports writer was Damon Runyan who in later years became a world-renowned journalist.

Around this same time Weir, his seven brothers and a cousin traveled as a baseball team. They called themselves "Weir's Colts."

"We didn't play very great ball," he commented, "although one brother, Joe, became a big league shortstop. We drew terrific crowds because we were one family."

He spoke of how "we cockeyed kids always had to put on a show" and he called the team a "bunch of clowns."

Wedding Bells

Married in 1915, Weir and his bride, Helen (Davenport), moved to Grant, Neb. where he leased a newspaper. They moved the following year to Dalton, Neb. and published the Dalton Delegate. Weir believes this is the only newspaper with the name "Delegate" attached to it.

In 1917 they brought the Silverton, Ore. Tribune, but sold it after the United States went to war with Germany. Leaving Mrs. Weir in Ordway, Colo. where the couple met in 1913 when Weir was editor of the Ordway Call, he went to France with the 6th United States Army Division, after training at Vancouver, Wash.

During the war, Weir took part in three campaigns: Alsace-Lorraine, The Champagne Sector, and the Argonne, and has a regimental citation for his part in the battle of the Argonne where four men of his squadron were killed on the first day of the Argonne offensive, Sept. 26th, 1918. He was hospitalized in France from the Armistice on Nov. 11th until the following March, returning from the Port of Marseilles on an interned Austrian ship, "The Francisca" with its belligerent crew. The crew was prevented from mutiny only by the superior efforts of the 130 rank casualties recently released from army hospitals in France.

In the meantime, Mrs. Weir had taken their young daughter, Jeanne, and moved West to Oakland where she worked as a bank teller until her husband's return.

Upon his return the Weirs purchased a daily newspaper in Porterville, Calif. It was while publishing this paper that he had an unexpected visitor one day.

Familiar Stranger

A man told Weir that he had once been a newspaper man and, whenever he passed a newspaper office, the smell of printer's ink drew him inside.

The visit was a pleasant one and Weir, sensing a vague familiarity, finally mentioned to his guest how very much like Wallace Beery he appeared.

"I am Wallace Beery," the man admitted.

The two men formed a friendship that lasted and they spent a number of visits together after that day. Whenever the actor was in the vicinity, he always dropped by for a chat.

June 20, 1919 found the Weir family the new owners of the Solano Republican in Suisun. The plant moved to Fairfield in 1923. This paper, established in 1855, was the first that had editorialized for Lincoln for president.

Weir was now putting down his roots in a city where he would thrive and grow as it grew. For the next 33 years the Solano Republican would enlarge and flourish under this man's guiding hand. He modestly states, "If I ever earned any commendation as a newspaperman, it was for the dubious notoriety gained through my weekly column entitled "Thoughts While Rolling Along."

Besides his newspaper work, he became active in youth work. The first Boy Scout troop in Solano county was organized by Weir on August 12, 1920 and he was the Scout master for three years.

"I've always liked kids . . . especially those who wish to amount to something," states the author and journalist.

The Fairfield Junior Rifle club was another of Weir's projects. He is still in charge of this organization which teaches rifle safety to some 200 youngsters a year under the jurisdiction of the local Police department and of which he is a member. He also holds a membership in the National Rifle Association.

While youth work held a large place in the scope of Weir's life, he still had time for other activities.

In 1921 he organized Reams Post of the American Legion and it is still the only Legion post here. He served as the first adjutant and is a charter member.

Another Newspaper

He took a year from his own newspaper and other interests to go to Burlingame, Calif. and establish the Burlingame Star, which later became the Advance-Star.

Upon his return to Fairfield in 1924, he took up where he left off by organizing the Fairfield Lions club on July 30, 1924. Today, he is the only active charter member in this service club of 80 members.

Weir is a great lover of trees. In 1925 he helped organize the first tree planting campaign, sponsored by the Lions club, and 500 trees were planted all over Fairfield. The city sometimes had to haul water from Cement Hill to irrigate them. They are the large Arizona Ash trees you see in the older part of town and on Empire Street.

The large Deodara evergreen on the east side of the County Library was brought by Weir from a nursery and planted by the Lions club on Washington's 200th anniversary, February 22, 1932.

Having been a Mason since 1913 he became active in Suisun Lodge No. 55, one of the oldest Masonic Lodges in California. He now is a Past Master of this lodge, as well as a Past Patron of Suisun Chapter No. 2, Order of the Eastern Star, and a member of Ben Ali Shrine Temple at Sacramento.

Meets Opposition

While all his projects had been a success so far, David Andrew Weir met strong opposition to a newly proposed campaign in 1927-28. The mosquitoes were so bad many afternoons that local stores would close and people would stay inside their homes to avoid the pesky insects.

Weir and three members of the

Lions club attended Council meetings in all towns in the county to convince the city fathers and the supervisors that an abatement program should be started.

In answer to his request, one supervisor laughed at Weir and asked, "What do you want us to do, kid, catch the mosquitoes and pull their heads off?"

Weir told him mosquitoes could fly 40 miles and Marin County was forming an abatement district. Their mosquitoes could travel the 30 miles from Marin to Fairfield. Then he set out to prove his point.

Flying a small plane over the marshes near Cordelia, just six miles out of Fairfield, an expert crop-duster sprayed pink water color over the breeding area. Weir let the supervisor believe the coloring had been done in Marin County and suggested he watch Fairfield the next day.

Sure enough, the following afternoon, the city was infested with pink winged mosquitoes. After this it wasn't hard to get the real interest of the supervisors, and Solano county created a mosquito abatement district in short order which has proved to be a blessing ever since.

During the early 20's, Mrs. Weir became Postmaster, only to lose her job in 1932 when the democrats took control of politics. She immediately went to work for her husband at the Solano Republican and in short time became skilled as a linotype operator.

"This was lucky during the war years with no help available," Weir said. "She did all the work while I visited with the customers!"

A Sharp Stick

Of his wife, Weir observes, "Behind every man there's a woman with a sharp stick. The sharper the stick, the more successful the man. I never saw a man who was worth a darn if there wasn't a woman somewhere around."

In the late 1930's, David A. Weir started another project. This one would take him 20 years to finish and lead him as far away as Liverpool, England.

He began gathering material on the life of Captain Robert Henry Waterman, a former Clipper ship master who founded the city of Fairfield after he retired from the sea. (The former Waterman house is now owned by the C.E. Allans')

The research meant accumulation of many facts, books, pictures and other data on Captain Waterman. Now the Weir library holds 120 books on the Clipper ship era, some of them very valuable, and many paintings of this 19th Century shipping age.

His book, "That Fabulous Captain Waterman" was finally finished and published in 1957.

Weir states that he has never held a political office. He did serve on the Selective or draft board during World War II, and the Fairfield school board for 12 years and has been active as a member of the Cancer Society and on the Solano County Branch board for 15 years.

"I never saw a cancer patient yet that wasn't more cheerful than those around," he said in a tone that showed pride in being a part of the cancer fight.

Sells 'Republican'

In 1949, Weir sold the Solano Republican. Mrs. Weir continued to work as bookkeeper for the

new publishers for awhile, and when she stopped the Weirs traveled extensively. They made two trips to Europe, one to the Near East and sailed on a freighter to many countries in South America.

Weir explains that he did not care much for the water, but he did enjoy mingling and eating with the crew members of the big steamers.

The Weirs have reared two daughters and, while he had high hopes of at least one showing an interest in the printing business, the girls proved to have minds of their own. One is married to an Air Force Colonel and the other to a Marine Colonel. The Weirs are proud of both girls and their families though they seldom meet.

Time is precious to Weir. He has so many things he wants to do. Still, there is time for a bowling game twice a week; and he looks forward to playing, sometimes with adults, sometimes with teenagers.

Research has been started on another Fairfield man of note, Jose Armijo. "To most people, Jose Armijo was an ordinary Mexican," the journalist said, "but he was brilliant. He was given a land grant in the early 1840's because of his outstanding exploits as a trail-blazer."

Shocked Speechless

Weir is a man who likes to get things done. He has little patience with foolish questions and practically snorted when he mentioned how people often ask what the most exciting event was in his life. He said excitement happens to him everyday, though he has been shocked speechless only once. This was when he was told a school would be named for him.

"It was the only time I couldn't say anything . . . I couldn't even whistle," he said by way of explaining how he felt at the time.

Young people played key roles in the dedication program of the new school. The Suisun Assembly Order of Rainbow for Girls, of which Weir is Rainbow Dad, the local 4-H club, Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts sponsored the planting of two Maple trees and two flowering Torquata trees, presented by Weir, on the grounds of the new David Weir school on Pennsylvania Avenue. A tree will be dedicated to each of the four youth groups.

What better way to say "Thank You" to this man who has dedicated the greater part of his life to the betterment of his community and its young people than to name a school for him?

They kept their

eyes on the

*These local
visionaries*

had a hand in shaping the Solano County of today



WILLIAM PIERCE



ALLAI
WITT

DAILY REPUBLIC FILE

STORIES

FAIRFIELD —

The vision came in 1845 when William H. Sloat made the chance comment that Richmond was looking for water and was eyeing Monticello on Putah Creek as the perfect place for a dam.

"He thought it would be awful if the Bay Area got the water we could use," said his son, Lewis Pierce, in the history "The Solano Water Story."

The elder Pierce, who had a ranch in Suisun Valley, campaigned for three long, frustrating decades, slowly gathering support to form the Solano Water Council, which eventually became the Solano Irrigation District.

A decade after that, the dam Pierce envisioned in Devil's Gate was built. Lake Berryessa was born and Solano County got a water source that changed its future.

"It changed the agriculture from just dry farming and allowed Vacaville to grow," Vacaville Mayor David Fleming said.

Pierce is just one of a historical cadre who just didn't live Solano County history, but shaped it.

They saw a future and steered it, despite cross-currents ofathy and opposition, to make Solano County what it is today. Here are a few of those who made their mark.

Navy Commodore John Drake Sloat

Sloat first stepped onto California's stage on July 7, 1846, when he and his naval forces captured Monterey in the Mexican War.

Six years later, he was assigned to find the best site for the Navy's first Pacific base and shipyard. After visiting the San Francisco Bay area, he and his committee picked Mare Island, partly because of its proximity to the state capitol at that time.

"It was his recommendation that led to the establishment of Mare Island," Vallejo Naval and Historical Museum Director Jim Kern said.

John Frisbee

Considered the founder of Vallejo, Frisbee came west from New York during the Mexican War as a member of the unit called Stevenson's regiment.

He was put in charge of the barracks at Sonoma, became close friends with Mexican Gen. Mariano Vallejo — who commanded the area for the Mexican government — and married one of his daughters after

Vallejo became an American citizen.

"Vallejo had made the generous offer to build the state capitol that became Vallejo," Kern said. "Frisbee came here and got the city going. He owned a lot of the property in the city, started the first bank and also commissioned the survey that laid out the plan for the city."

"He was not only the founder, but also the first promoter for the city of Vallejo," Kern said.

Capt. Robert Waterman and Capt. Josiah Wing

Not all the visionaries liked each other.

The two founders of Fairfield and Suisun City — Capt. Robert Waterman and Capt. Josiah Wing — carried on a healthy hatred, according to historians.

Waterman was a successful, controversial clipper ship captain who retired to Solano County in 1852 after buying a large spread that bordered the Suisun Marsh from A.A. Ritchie.

He named it Cordelia and saw it as a major agricultural shipping port for central Solano County.

The ambitious sea captain didn't fully explore the marsh's sloughs and ~~failed to reckon with an equally ambitious schooner captain Josiah Wing, who found an island in the marsh Waterman didn't own.~~

Wing envisioned his own inland port on the island and established Suisun City, which quickly prospered.

Waterman was reportedly livid at being outmaneuvered but not defeated.

He quickly established Fairfield on Suisun City's landward side and campaigned to make it the county seat.

Publisher and state Sen. Luthor Gibson



LUTHOR GIBSON

Gibson ran the Vallejo Times-Herald when it was not just a Solano County newspaper, but the Solano County newspaper.

Also a state senator,

Gibson was a key player in securing federal support for the Monticello Dam and secured Solano County the funding for highways it now has.

"The power of that press was strong. He was big," Tom Hannigan said. "People went to Luthor and talked to him on whether they should run for office and get his blessing."

Elisa P. Buckingham

While she did not think of herself as a feminist, Buckingham won statewide fame as an innovator and leader in the fruit industry of the 1880s.

"She saw the promise of fruit and was able to promote it so people back east knew where the fruit was coming from," Vacaville Museum Director Ruth Begell said.

Born in New York, she divorced her husband, a San Francisco shoe manufacturer, and moved to Vacaville where she established a high lucrative fruit orchard business.

"She was more than just a rancher and a businesswoman," Begell said. "She was also very important to the women's rights movement early in her lifetime."

Edwin "Bunny" and Helen Power

A disastrous frost inspired the 1921 birth of Vacaville's most famous restaurant — The Nut Tree — as a roadside fruit stand decorated with flowers and small flags.

The orchardist couple had heard that Southern Californian growers were finding success with stands of their own and decided to try their hand by selling whatever fruit had survived a frost that stripped their 10-acre ranch.

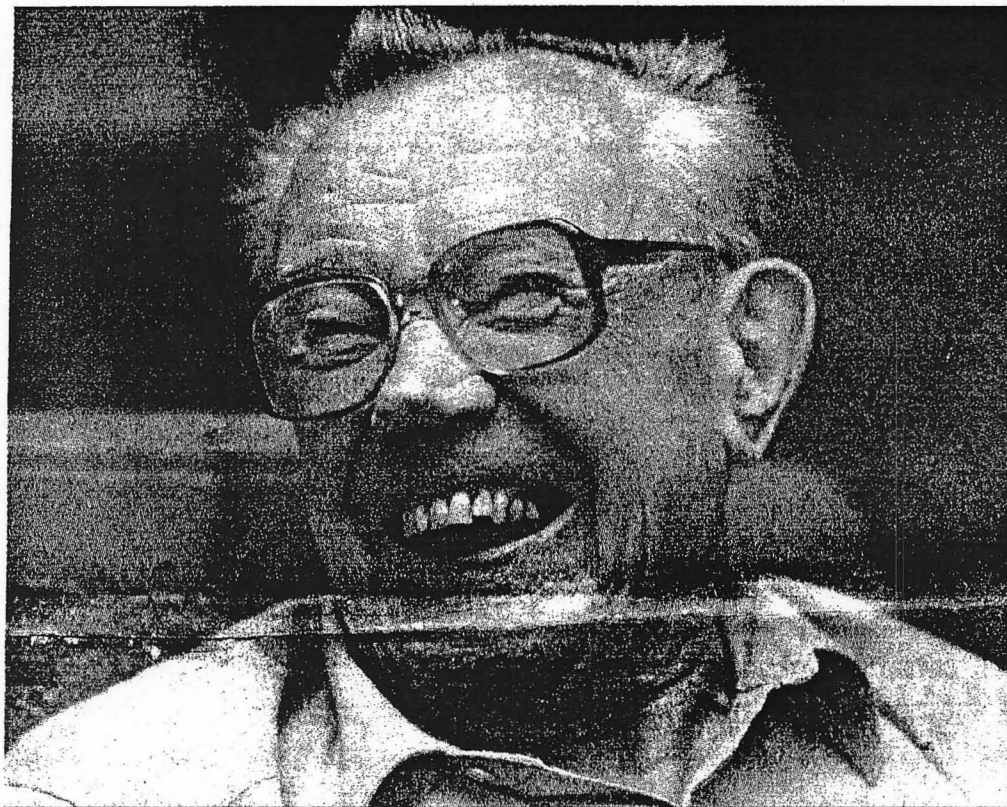
"They were experts at marketing to the traveler, running a business that was customer-service oriented," Begell said. "For their time, it was very visionary. They were innovators in terms of the food they served, forerunners of the California cuisine."

Fairfield mayors Allan Witt and Arnie Digerud

"They were instrumental for doing things that were historical," Tom Hannigan said.

Witt was on the City Council when Fairfield acquired the park land that is now named after him. He was also the driving force for getting badly needed water rights from Benicia's share of the Solano Water project.

"It was at a time when the Benicia Arsenal was closing down and Benicia was in a depression," Tom Hannigan said.



Former Fairfield mayors Arnie Digerud, left, and Allan Witt, above, were "instrumental for doing things that were historical," according to Tom Hannigan.

DAILY REPUBLIC FILE/1992

Witt knew Fairfield was going to grow and bought the water at a time such as move was still considered quite a gamble.

"It ensured the water requirements were filled for such large users as the Anheuser-Busch plant," Tom Hannigan said.

Digerud was instrumental in bringing water from the Putah South Canal project to Fairfield as well as pushed to annex Travis Air Force Base into Fairfield City limits.

B. Gale Wilson



B. GALE WILSON

It was only right that Fairfield's near-legendary city manager would have the best view in Fairfield's City Hall.

"There was nothing more important than putting Gale in a fourth-floor corner

office and allowing him to look out over the city," former State Assemblyman and long-time Fairfield resident Tom Hannigan said.

That view allowed Wilson to better visualize where Fairfield should go and how to get there. Many of Wilson's hires are still in top city positions.

"He was probably unique among city managers when it came to thinking ahead," Jan Hannigan said.

Wilson spent more than 30 years as Fairfield's top administrator with a tenure that saw the Solano Mall be built and Fairfield's city limit expand westward to include Cordelia Village.

Notorious crooks made mark here

By IAN THOMPSON
Daily Republic Staff Writer

ROCKVILLE — Everyone knows mass murderer Charles Manson makes his home in Vacaville now, compliments of the California Medical Facility.

Gregory Powell, the famous Onion Field killer, is taking up residence at the Vacaville state prison as well.

But, to the old annuals of Solano County crime, the two well-known murders are latecomers.

Solano County has been host to many crafty criminals in its time, ranging from almost unknowns such as counterfeiter Giovanni Montalbano and swindler S.C. Bradshaw to California's most noted bandit, C.E. Bolton, alias Black Bart.

Bolton made most of his reputation as a robber elsewhere, but is rumored to have visited these parts in the 1860s. Some tales have it that local poet Edwin Markham hid him in the Lagoon Valley area once.

The only trace of Bolton now in

Our Solano Heritage



Solano County is his prison record at CMF. That record is stored in the identification unit of the Department of Corrections, located at CMF.

The now sleepy town of Collinsville was where Bradshaw reportedly made his money by swindling settlers from both coasts.

Collinsville was first settled in 1859 by C.J. Collins. In 1861, he surveyed the town, building a store and a wharf. Six years later, he sold his holdings to a S.C. Bradshaw, who immediately changed the name of the settlement to Newport.

See Crooks, Page 8a

(FRONT)										(REVERSE)									
Height	1 m	Head length		L. Foot		Eye Circle		Age	28 Years	Institution	CALIFORNIA STATE PRISON	Reg. No.	11046	Color	White				
Outs. A.	1 m	width		" Mid F		Periph. Z				NAME	C. E. BOLTON	Received	11-21-1883	Sentence	6 years				
Track		Ear		" L F		Pecul.				Alias	"Black Bart"	County	Calaveras	Disch.	1-21-1888				
English	5'7"	Finger Print		" F						Crime	Robbery	Occupation	Laborer	Paroled					
Height		Classification								Previous Record	No previous prison record								
										<p>MARKS, SCARS, AND MOLES</p> <p>Scar. on L. Cheek / Bone</p> <p>Scar. at top forehead</p> <p>Scar. on left wrist</p> <p>Scar. on R. up arm</p> <p>Gunshot wounds R. abdomen</p> <p>Other Description: High cheek bones</p> <p>Heavy eye brow</p> <p>Steady larger long</p> <p>Forearms hairy</p> <p>tuft of hair on breast</p> <p>Prom. nose and broad at base</p>									
<p>DESCRIPTIVE</p> <p>Teeth</p>										Good	Build	Medium	Beard	Grey	Complexion	White			
Teeth	Good	Build	Medium	Beard	Grey	Complexion	White												

This identification card in the files at the California Medical Facility provides a rare photograph and unusual information about one of California's

most noted bandits, C.E. Bolton, alias "Black Bart." Were the gunshot wounds in the abdomen the price of a successful robbery?

Crooks

From Page One

Immediately after, Bradshaw prepared a town plan showing an elaborate city roughly the size of turn-of-the-century San Francisco. The little town even received bigger play on maps than Sacramento.

Bradshaw touted Newport as the railroad terminus to the west with eight separate lines converging on the town from all directions.

Maps at that time showed imaginary and improperly routed railroads, including the Great Pacific RR, the Humboldt RR and N, the West Pacific RR, the Marysville & Colusa RR, the Oroville RR, the Sacramento & Colfax RR, the Antioch RR, and a rail line from the Mount Diablo coal mines to Newport.

Eastern agents reportedly sold and resold dozens of plots of swamp and marsh located around the community.

Ten dollars in San Francisco could buy a lot and an excursion to see the land during the summer because during that season the land was reasonably dry.

Bradshaw reportedly carried on for five years before selling his

holdings to E.I. Upham and disappearing from the county.

Upham, not wanting to be connected to the notoriety of Newport, changed the name back to Colinsville and once again brought respectability to the little town.

Up in the hills above Suisun Valley, Montelbano made his small mark on Solano County history as that of the county's greatest counterfeiter.

Living just west of Fairfield, Montelbano, according to the secret service agent who arrested and tossed him into the Alameda County Jail in early 1895, was one of the most prolific counterfeiters on the West Coast.

"He has made and circulated more counterfeits of silver dollars, dimes and quarters in the past five years than any other ten operators combined," said Assistant Secret Service Agent Dudley Harris in a Feb. 28, 1895 San Francisco Weekly Examiner article.

Montelbano's product reportedly was pretty good, being described as having a true ring.

Harris should know. At that time, the Pacific Coast had more "cunning bands of manufacturers of spurious coin" arrested here than anywhere else in the United States.

The cave where Montelbano

reportedly worked is located in hills just four miles northwest of Fairfield. The Examiner described it "as a lonely spot in the rugged foothills, the entrance to which was so cunningly closed by the sod that there was no external evidence of its existence."

Montelbano even took off his shoes before entering or leaving so not to leave footprints. He also hauled the ashes from his furnace miles away before dumping as well.

He first showed up in Solano County in 1891 and outfitted his cave. An undersheriff named Robinson spotted him frequently. One time, Robinson said Montelbano went to a Fairfield show and took all the kids in sight with him, paying their way in counterfeit dimes.

He worked at night in the cave while sleeping in a rude hut two miles away in the Suisun Valley during the daytime.

Montelbano was eventually arrested in Vallejo for passing bad coins, but his place was discovered only by accident.

A hunter fired a shot near the hiding place startled the counterfeiter into lifting the sod opening and popping out. Surprised, the hunter took off and retold his story after Montelbano's arrest.

Harris, using the information,

found the place and called it "the oddest thing ever unearthed by the government."

"In order to enter it I had to lift up some sod, after which I stepped down about four feet," said Harris, "I then crawled in about ten feet and came down to a second bench, which was the entrance to the counterfeiter's den proper."

"I had to bend over to get into this second bench and crawl some distance, after which I was in this infernal chamber so narrow and cramped that a man of ordinary height could not stand erect," said Harris. "The tallow from the many candles had run down in streams on the walls of the cavern."

The furnace was a powder keg with the flue a long piece of well tubing. It ran to the top of the hill through the earth, terminating some distance away in a heap of brush.

Ladles, crucibles, pincers, reeding machines and a complete polishing outfit were scattered across the floor of the chamber along with broken molds and several sacks of unfinished dimes, quarters and dollars.

The supply included quantities of antimony, bismuth, block tin and inglass.

Rockville scratches tell of Indian travels

By Ian Thompson
Daily Republic Staff Writer

ROCKVILLE — Carved on a moss-encrusted crag high in the Rockville Hills is what local historians contend is the page of a pictorial diary left behind by Indian scouts in the John Fremont expedition, which passed through Solano County in the 1840s.

The petroglyphs, rock carvings that record a story using relatively simple symbols, apparently recount the passage of the Fremont expedition from Rockville into the nearby hills, according to David Liebenstein, a former Armijo High School student who holds the

secret of the site's location.

At least one of the symbols carved at the Solano site appears to link the petroglyphs to an early foray into California by Gen. John C. Fremont, who surveyed the region for the U.S. Army.

"The crossed swords indicate the Indians were part of a cavalry outfit," Liebenstein said, pointing to one faint carving.

Other figures indicate that one of the party's horses died near there, that the coast was nearby and that relations with the remnants of the Suisuni Indians were not good.

See Scratches, Back of Section

Scratches

From Page One

Liebenstein discovered the petroglyphs in 1975 after hearing stories about them as a Boy Scout camping in Rockville Park.

The Rockville petroglyphs were originally believed to be random etchings made by teen-agers on a lark.

But former Pena Adobe curator Rodney Rulofson, who studied them and similar drawings elsewhere in California, contends the drawings were artwork of the Algonquin Indians of Delaware. Algonquins served as scouts on Fremont's expeditions.

Rulofson checked the log made by Fremont of his earlier travels for other campsite locations. He found similar petroglyphs at

campsites near San Jose and in Nevada.

"This proved that they were neither teen-ager's artwork nor traceable to the local Suisun(i) Indians," according to the authors of "The Way It Was," a 1975 listing of historic sites.

The Solano County site is one of seven similarly decorated sites located and identified in a 1958 University of California archaeological study. The study said the sites were distinctly different from other identified prehistoric petroglyphs in California and Nevada.

Four are in Alameda County, one near Castle Crags in Shasta County and near Genoa, Nev.

Liebenstein, then an Armijo student, originally hiked into the hills to hunt for a cave he heard Suisuni Indians used as refuge

after Mexican soldiers crossed the Carquinez Straits to decimate the tribe.

"We originally thought the figures were a key to where the cave was," Liebenstein said.

Liebenstein never found the cave. His research led him to Rulofson, who helped Liebenstein translate the figures.

The petroglyphs are part of a shrinking number of archaeological sites in Rockville. Developments have already eradicated others such as an Indian mortar stone and hog scalding pit recently demolished by the developer of the Stonedene property.

"This site is one of the last things left," Liebenstein said. "It's not right what is being done here."

Suisun Scene

Kids carry books, guns to school in 1877

By Barry Eberling
of the Daily Republic

Pistol-packing schoolboys and dangerous Main Street jokes were in the news during this week in Suisun City's history.

The following stories come from the Solano Republican, which reported on the small waterfront town from its Main Street office.

115 years ago

Boys with guns were a problem in January 1877.

"Some of our larger boys imagine it is an evidence of manhood and withal a very gallant and smart thing to carry a pistol," the Republican said.

"We understand that several of those boys constantly carry little derringers in their pockets on the streets, at home, in school and out of school. They are proud

'We understand that several of those boys constantly carry little derringers in their pockets on the streets, at home, in school and out of school. They are proud of these little weapons and frequently exhibit their intricate workings to their younger, gaping schoolmates.'

— Solano Republican, 1877

of these little weapons and frequently exhibit their intricate workings to their younger, gaping schoolmates."

An accident could happen while these "wonder struck little shavers" are standing nearby, the paper said. It wondered that the principal allowed guns on the school grounds, and called upon parents to wake up.

"Don't be blinded by that foolish regard that excuses a multitude of sins, for

if you do, your boy is a full-fledged hoodlum before you know it," the paper said.

Another group of "naughty boys" drew the Republican's wrath. These youngsters put strings across Main Street sidewalks just high enough to trip pedestrians.

"Boys, this is a very dangerous trick, and should you be caught, we believe a public cow-hiding on your bare backs would be the exact thing," the paper said.

Solano Heritage

It also had a beef with the public in general, which it claimed was ignorant of the mission of a country newspaper.

"Let a paper be very lax about the interests of a town and dole out nothing but fulsome praise for every enterprise and everything appertaining to the town, and it will create enemies on every hand." the paper said.

While the Republican would never stoop to personal controversy, it would never shy from upholding Suisun City's best interests, no matter who was offended, it said.

The paper would abide by this principal "thought the heavens shall fall," it said.

100 years ago

Local resident Tom Cross finally solved a problem he was having with his

right eye: he went to a San Francisco doctor and had it removed.

"In this instance, if in no other, Tom obeyed the divine injunction that, 'If your eye offend thee, pluck it out,' the Republican said.

The Republican had a laugh at the following "brilliant" resolution passed by the Farmers Alliance of Napa:

"We are opposed to the profession of attorneys, believing their business is to defeat rather than attain justice."

"Put that in your corn cob and smoke it, ye expounders of law and equity," the paper said.

Teachers at Crystal School declared war on students marking up school walls with lead pencils.

"A defaced school house speak volumes against the proper training of youth," the Republican said.

Farmers contribute much to our society



B Hancock
Commentary

On a recent Saturday afternoon, huge, well-manned farm machines turned the soil in fields across from the Rockville Stone Chapel. A long-ago time, when no such machinery was available, farm families held fund-raisers and netted \$5,000 to build the church in 1852. Quite a feat and a remarkable amount of money. Because of those families and their descendants, we now have the privilege of enjoying a rural area as well as nearby small cities. While we are considering "land uses" we might do well to acknowledge that agriculture added \$212 million to our economy (\$821 million with value added, such as food processing, etc.) and \$1.6 billion in sales in 1996.

Members and friends of the Solano County Historical Society met on that Saturday at the Rockville Chapel for their annual Pioneer Day Celebration. Suisun Valley farmer Fred Foon was honored through an address by his grandson, Burton Foon.

Fred Foon was born in Winters in 1903 and came to Suisun Valley with his parents when he was 2 years old. He died at age 92 on July 27, 1995, at home on the family farm.

"My grandfather was a unique and special person and there are four generations of his family here. He went to Rockville School and made the eighth grade in only six years; but Mrs. Bowman washed his mouth out with soap several times for swearing."

Arranged marriages were the norm in those days and it was not easy finding a Chinese girl who wanted to be a farmer's wife. My great grandfather drove to San Francisco and brought home Daisy for his son's bride. Together they had 7 children, 22 grandchildren and 6 great-grandchildren. They also took care of other children in the family who needed them.

They sent six of their children to the University of California, Berkeley — quite an accomplishment then. He also helped deliver several of the children; going to the hospital wasn't the norm. Doctors made house calls though and if they came, they charged \$45 for boy babies and \$40 for girls. They knew that many families wanted boys to carry on the family name.

Grandfather told me the reason he had so many children

was, "You could never have too many prune pickers." A hard job was knocking the prunes off the tree with a long wooden pole; stooping down to pick them up was even worse. Cutting fruit at the local sheds brought 10 cents a lug and a lug held 40 to 45 pounds of fruit.

He also said that hard work never hurt anyone and, if you are going to do something, do it right the first time. There was no modern machinery; it was work from sun up to sundown. It took a special type of person to persevere. My grandfather still drove our International flatbed truck loaded with pears to the inspection yard in his 70s, never allowing younger, bigger truckers to get in front of him in line.

I had a special friendship with my grandfather and knew the bumps, bruises, cuts and slivers that were part of that family farming life. He would take the slivers out of my hands saying, "I'm almost there. I think I got it. Hold still." That went on for what seemed like 10 minutes. I remember that the needles for the sliver came from the red, embroidered pin cushion in the second right hand drawer of my grandmother's sewing machine cabinet.

The valley was mostly orchards then, but my grandfather had a big garden with vegetables. People came from miles away for apricots, peaches, pears and vegetables in season. Grandfather would notify his customers, take their orders and pick the fruit himself, even in 100 degree weather when he was 70 plus. He never refused to take a fruit order.

Burton Foon spoke very well of his grandfather and family farming. In his benediction, Pastor Larry Vilardo of Rockville Presbyterian Fellowship added the word "faith" to complete the fond remembrances of Fred Foon, Suisun Valley Farmer.

B Hancock is the wife of a former Daily Republic publisher.

Ed Hopkins: Big part of Armijo High's history

By Jon Gibson

Daily Republic Sports Writer

When Ed Hopkins enrolled at Armijo High School as a freshman in the fall of 1929, he probably had no idea of the impact he would eventually have on the school's athletic history.

After graduating in 1933 and getting his degree from University of California, Berkeley in 1939, Hopkins returned to Armijo in 1940 and began a coaching career that, with the exception of a brief stint in the service during World War II, spanned the better part of 35 years.

Between 1940 and 1975, Hopkins, basketball, football, baseball and track and field teams captured 31

championships. A charter member of the California Coaches Association since its inception in 1953, Hopkins recorded 509 basketball coaching victories before his retirement in 1975.

The Solano Classic was renamed in his honor later that year, and he was elected to the CCA's Hall of Fame in 1977.

Although he no longer coaches at Armijo, the 69-year-old Hopkins still teaches there on a substitute basis. In recent years, he has coached basketball at Golden West Intermediate School, and has headed several Armijo alumni teams.

A former football, basketball and baseball standout with the Indians

and a member of the school's Hall of Fame, Hopkins has noticed quite a few changes in the sports he played and coached at Armijo.

For instance, within certain limits, a football coach today can make player substitutions at will — something Hopkins couldn't do when he played.

In basketball, a high school or college player is out of the game after five personal fouls. But in Hopkins' early days as a player and coach, the limit was four.

Additionally, there was a center jump — after each basket.

"They eliminated that when I was in college because games were taking forever to play," he said. "And

it's a good thing, considering how fast some teams get up and down the floor to score these days."

Another change that Hopkins has witnessed over the years comes in the area of local rivalries.

"When I was playing, Rio Vista was one of our big rivals," he said. "Benicia was another big one, especially in football."

"And the annual Armijo-Vacaville game was almost like Cal and Stanford — you almost never knew what would happen until the game was almost over," he added.

But when Vanden opened in the fall of 1964 and Fairfield came along two years later, the Indians suddenly had a pair of crosstown rivals —

at least until the 1970s, when Vanden returned to the Superior California Athletic League, a league for smaller schools, and stopped playing Armijo on a regular basis.

"I enjoyed it," he said of the crosstown confrontations. "I liked being in a backyard league with an intense rivalry — but at the same time, you could leave it on the court once the game was over."

One thing Hopkins noticed about today's football and basketball players — and today's athletes in general — is that they're bigger, stronger and faster than many of the guys he played with or coached, a factor he attributes to diets and training methods.

Old Archive Story

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FAIRFIELD - On August 15, 1775, as America's Revolutionary War was starting on the east coast, a Spaniard named Jose De Canizares took shelter at Benicia's Southampton Bay.

He was the first European to set foot in what would one day become Solano County.

At that time, herds of tule elk still swam through Suisun Bay and Suisun Marsh was a wild mosquito-infested swamp of winding sloughs.

Still, the Solano County that Canizares saw was not without humans. The Patwin Indians had lived here for hundreds of years, in groups of about 100 people.

Canizares's arrival set the stage for a culture clash, with the Native Americans pitting their poisoned arrows against Spanish guns.

The Spanish won that decades-long battle and a smallpox epidemic in the 1800s killed off most of the local Native Americans. Still, one Native American would eventually be honored by having the county named after him.

In some historical accounts, Chief Solano was a mighty warrior who made a deal with Gen. Mariano Vallejo and the Mexican government to keep the peace. Solano agreed to secure the area for Mexican settlement and Vallejo agreed to help Solano in wars against other Native American tribes.

But local historian Clyde Low has challenged the portrayal of Solano as a noble and enlightened leader.

Possibly Vallejo bestowed honors on Solano to strengthen Solano's position among his people, then used him in his campaigns against Native Americans, Low said in a 1986 Solano Historian article. Rather than protect his people, Solano helped enslave them.

Low included an account that Charles Brown wrote of Solano after an 1835 battle that Solano and Vallejo fought against northern tribes.

``The worst thing I ever saw in my life was done then by Solano, the head Indian of Vallejo," Brown later wrote.

``There was a woman of the rancheria who had a child slung on her back and was far advanced in pregnancy.

``Solano first lanced the child on the back and then lanced the woman, ripping the belly open and pulling the phoetas (sic) out.

``The villainy of the act so maddened me that I was at the point of shooting Solano when Lt. Vallejo stopped me, saying that Solano was his best friend."

Whatever the truth about Solano's character, his name now graces a county that has three cities in its mid-section, each with colorful histories of their own:

Fairfield - Capt. Robert Waterman decided in the early 1850s that the vacant field near Suisun Marsh would be a good place for a new town. The clipper captain founded Fairfield, naming it after his home town in Connecticut.

Historian J.P. Munro Fraser wrote about the Fairfield he saw in the 1870s.

``Fairfield is a pretty little town of considerable promise and possessing as it does the county buildings, there is

considerable bustle to be observed during the sessions of the different courts," he wrote.

"Its houses, for the most part, are enclosed by neat fences and well-kept gardens, vineyards and orchards, while the streets are wide, though not much worn by traffic."

By 1925, Fairfield had only a few thousand hundred residents. But the military opened Travis Air Force Base about 50 years ago and that helped touch off a post-World-War-II growth boom that continues to this day, when Fairfield has 87,000 residents.

Suisun City - Capt. Josiah Wing founded Suisun City in 1851 as a shipping point along the Suisun Slough. The coming of the Central Pacific railroad in the 1868 bolstered Suisun's status as central Solano County's preeminent town.

"Suisun, as it is today, is a flourishing little town of about 1,800 inhabitants," Munro Fraser wrote in the 1870s. "Its streets are, as a rule, well filled with people, while its stores, of which there are some very handsome ones, appear to have a fair share of business."

But the state highway bypassed Suisun City in the early 1900s, helping to send Suisun into a tailspin. Today, the city stresses the Victorian homes and historical waterfront buildings from its glory days as it tries to reinvent itself as a regional tourist destination.

Vacaville - Manuel Vaca and his family got a land grant in the Vaca Valley in 1842. He later sold a 9-square-mile plot to Kentucky lawyer William McDaniel for \$3,000, with the proviso that the town founded there bear his name.

"As viewed from the head of Pleasants valley, no more picturesque landscape can be found throughout the length and breadth of the Golden State than that stretching to the southward," Munro Fraser wrote in the 1870s.

Fruit orchards in the Vaca Valley powered Vacaville's economy in the early days. Today, Vacaville is about 26 square miles and has about 84,500 residents.

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Police cracked down

on jaywalking in 1947

By Barry Eberling

of the Daily Republic

FAIRFIELD - Police Chief Rex Clift was serious when he initiated the first jaywalking crackdown in Fairfield history in 1947.

Local residents had no illusions about that either. All they had to do was open up the local newspaper and read the headline, "Chief of Police Means Business." So the recent, and somewhat controversial, police push to ticket downtown jaywalkers has precedent. People in 1947 who were hellbent on making an illegal dash across Texas Street also had to keep a keen eye out for cops.

Some things were different back then, though.

Fairfield was a small town with a few thousand residents in a rural area, and Texas Street served as the local stretch of Highway 40 running between San Francisco and Sacramento. This was long before Interstate 80 was built.

Fairfield officials noted the 14,000 or so cars that daily passed down Texas Street and decided to install stoplights.

In the summer of 1947, Pierce Electric Co. of Vallejo started putting up lights on Texas Street at Madison, Webster and Union streets. County supervisors voted to let the company keep its tool and maintenance shed in front of the county courthouse. On Oct. 7, 1947, the City Council made jaywalking illegal in Fairfield. But the law didn't take effect until November, when all three traffic lights were operating.

It was absolutely necessary that pedestrians and motorists obey the new lights, Clift said. Crossing in the middle of the block was also prohibited, he said.

He urged parents to discuss the new traffic regulations with their children.

Allan Witt, who has lived in town for decades, doesn't remember any hue and cry against the jaywalking law in 1947, he said.

"That's an old habit here, jaywalking," said Witt, who still operates his downtown barber shop. "You take your chances."

The lights were needed, he said.

"Hell, you had to put in a stop sign or you could never cross the street," Witt said.

On November 10, 1947, the Daily Republic printed the names of three jaywalkers, possibly the first to be ticketed in city history. These pioneers faced fines of up to \$50 or five days in the county jail, or both.

Jaywalking tickets are one item that apparently hasn't been affected much by inflation. Violators today pay up to \$54 for the first offense.

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Bug: solano county history

Benicia gets its name from Gen. Vallejo's wife

FAIRFIELD - Like most places, Solano County's history is memorialized in its names.

Here's a look at where some of the county's names came from:

Vallejo - Gen. Mariano Guadalupe Vallejo was born in Monterey in 1808 and embarked on a career that saw him lead troops against local Native Americans, found the town of Sonoma and serve in the state senate.

In 1850, he offered 148 acres along the San Pablo Bay as a site for the state capitol. The town ended up with his name, but the capitol stayed there only a few months in 1852, moved to Sacramento, moved back to Vallejo in 1853, moved to Benicia after a month and then moved permanently to Sacramento in 1854.

Benicia - A Kentucky printer and dentist named Robert Semple founded this town along the Carquinez Strait with Vallejo's help. In gratitude, Semple decided to name the town "Francisca," in honor of Vallejo's wife.

But Yerba Buena changed its name to San Francisco, in honor of St. Francis. Semple needed an alternative.

He looked at Francisca's full name, which was Francisca Maria Felipa Benicia Carrillo de Vallejo and chose Benicia, which means "blessed," said the 1989 book "Solano: An Illustrated History" by Frank Keegan.

Cordelia - Capt. Robert Waterman founded Cordelia in the mid-1800s near Cordelia Slough and the Sacramento-Benicia Road leading to Suisun and Green valleys. He thought this was a good site for central Solano County's major town, though his dream never came true.

Waterman named Cordelia after his wife, who was apparently upset he had named a street in his home town Connecticut after a former sweetheart, Miss Jones, Keegan wrote.

Waterman also founded Fairfield, which today is central Solano's major town. But he hadn't forgotten Miss Jones and named Fairfield's Great Jones Street after her, Keegan wrote.

Dixon - Thomas Dickson donated 10 acres for this town along the California Pacific railroad, which reached northern Solano in 1868. But the first shipment of goods there was addressed to "Dixon" and the misspelling stuck.

Rio Vista - Col. N.H. Davis founded the town near three branches of the Sacramento River in 1857 and called it Brazos del Rio, or "Arms of the River."

But Mrs. Kirkpatrick three years later suggested changing the name to Rio Vista or "River View." At the time, Davis had the only house in town, according to J.P. Munro Fraser's 1879 "History of Solano County."

A village soon grew, but was wiped out by the floods of 1862. Water stood 12 feet high on Main Street, Fraser wrote.

"For miles in all directions, the face of the earth was covered with a wild waste of waters," Fraser wrote.

Residents then relocated the town to a site less prone to flooding.

Elkhorn Peak - Apparently elk once frequented this hilltop rising west of Green Valley. In 1837, a pioneer called the hills between Napa County and Green Valley the Elk Hills.

Grizzly Island - Grizzly bears from Mount Diablo used to swim across Suisun Bay to the Suisun Marsh island to feed on rose hips and blackberries, pioneer Jack Soares once said. That's how Grizzly Island got its name, he said.

This account can be found in local resident Joan Frost's "A Brief Pictorial History of Grizzly Island."

But Frost also presented another explanation for the island's name. Grizzly Island was spelled "Grisly Island" on late 1800s maps and onetime resident Rachel Vennink thought that was no mistake.

Vennink arrived there during winter of 1906 when there were no roads and electricity. She later noted that Webster's Dictionary defines "grisly" as "terrifying, hideous or gruesome."

"She recalls how much it rained during that first awful winter when she was a very lonesome and homesick girl who thought that the island had been well-named," Frost wrote.

Carquinez Strait - Historians disagree how the strait separating Solano and Contra Costa counties got its name.

The name is taken from "Carkinos," the Greek word for crab, Marguerite Hunt wrote in her 1926 "History of Solano County." That's because an 1835 expedition led by Vallejo turned up plenty of crabs in the area.

But the book "California Place Names" by Erwin Gudde has a different theory. The name comes from the Karquin Indians and could mean "traders," Gudde wrote.

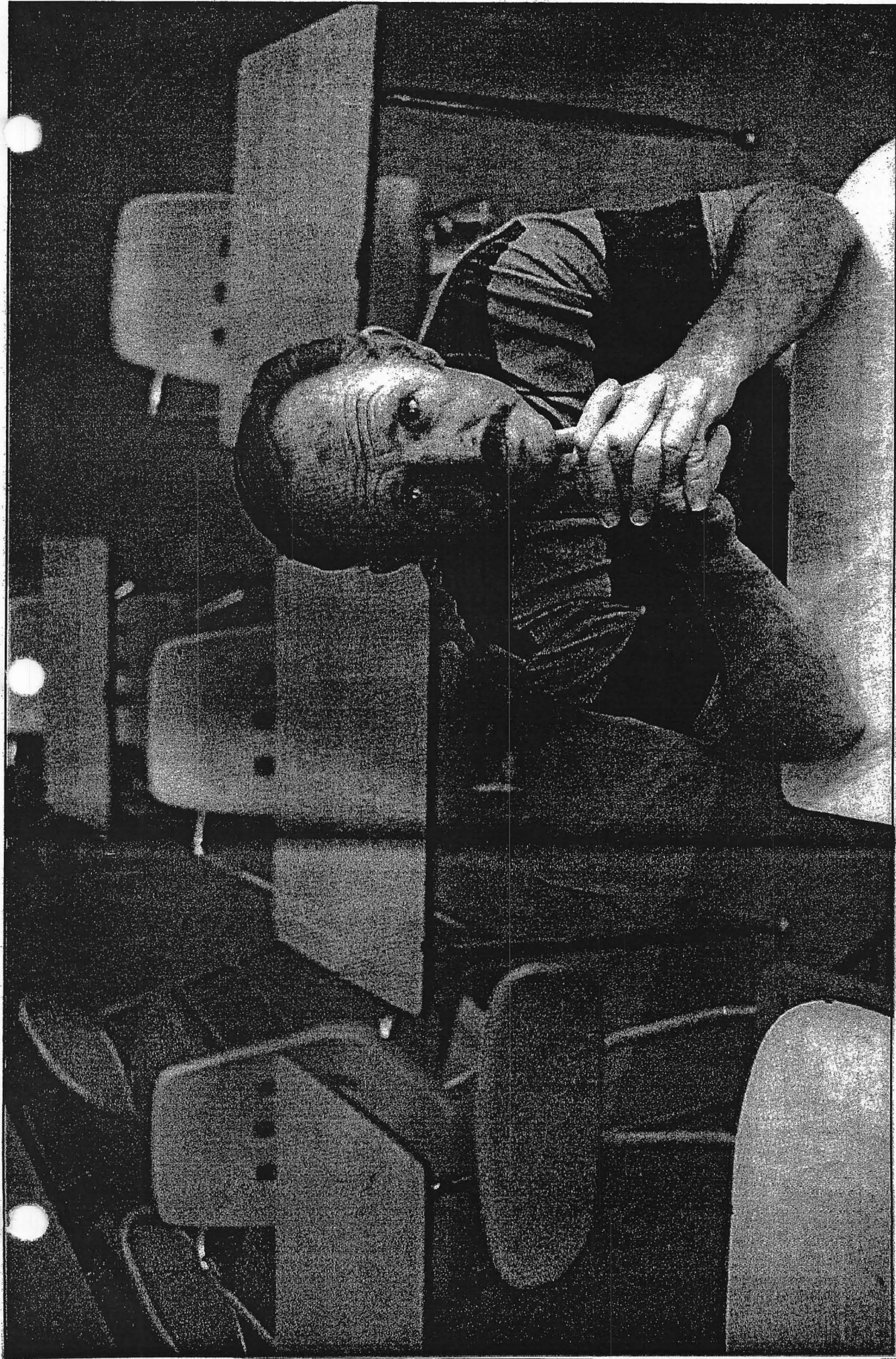
Montezuma Hills - Mormon leader L.W. Hastings tried to establish a Mormon colony near present-day Collinsville and Suisun Bay. He named his town "Montezuma City" in a bow to the Mexican government, which then ruled California.

Hastings then called the nearby hills the Montezuma Hills, Tom Gregory wrote in the 1912 book "History of Solano and Napa Counties."

But the Mormons decided to stay in Utah. Bayard Taylor visited Montezuma City in 1840 and note the sole building was Hasting's adobe house, which exists today.

That put Montezuma City far behind the would-be town of New York across Suisun Bay in Contra Costa County. New York had three homes, Taylor wrote.

Copy Story to Production



Golden memories of a Fairfield grammar school

By Art Isberg

of the Daily Republic

FAIRFIELD — That still summer morning in 1944, I climbed onto my bicycle and began peddling my way across the big, grassy oval center of the old government war housing project of Waterman Park.

The "park" was situated on the far, north-western end of Fairfield; beyond that it was all open fields, barb wire fences, white face cattle and sheep — all country.

Across the tall grass oval I hit the first pavement and Madison Street. I picked up speed and whizzed along the tree-lined sidewalk, past Dr. Bunny's huge mansion on the corner of Empire Street then one more short block to the main street, Texas Street, which I had to cross, and the only one with real traffic.

You see, back in those days, Texas Street was also Highway 40, and all traffic between the Bay Area and points inland used it. There was no traffic light, so

I had to stop and wait for a gap in the cars before running across, guiding the bike with my free hand.

But 50 years ago and at 7 a.m., there really wasn't that much traffic, at least nothing like the return trip later that afternoon.

After crossing Texas Street, the final two blocks were easy and quiet, the street lined with neat, one-story houses kept painted and clean, with green lawns bordering the sidewalk. I crossed Missouri Street, then finally Delaware. The school house was right across the street on the corner. It was the only grammar

school in all of Fairfield, and everyone went there.

■■■■

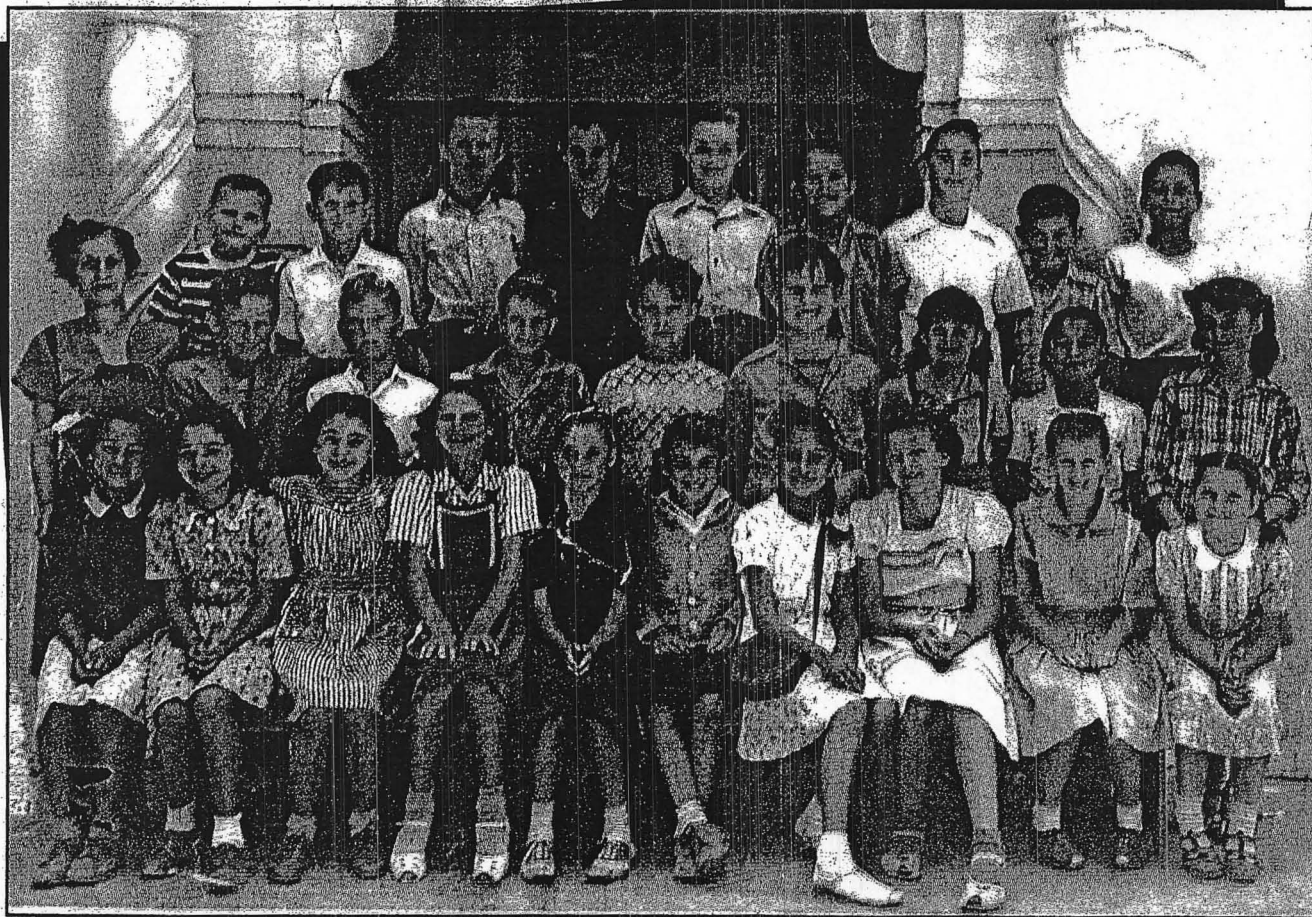
Actually, there were two schools back then, and even though they sat on the same lot, they were as different as day is from night. I suspect they were built some years apart due to their architectural differences.

The big one, a tall, two-story wooden structure covered in meticulous,

Delaware and Madison streets. A pair of huge palm trees towering above the second-story windows flanked the building on the Madison street side. A set of wide wooden stairs led from the rock hard play yard up to the main, second floor entrance. It was from this regal perch that every morning, a tall, stern, bespectacled Mr. Woods led us in the Pledge of Allegiance.

He surveyed the noisy, seething mass of adolescents below like a bull seal watching over his rookery. When the pledge began, everyone instantly fell quiet. If he caught you getting out of line, trying to knee the kid in front of you or pulling some girl's pigtails, it was a trip to his office, the "Chamber of Doom!" The very notion of it struck pure terror in our pounding, little hearts. Fairfield Elementary had rules, and we were there to follow them . . . there was never any doubt about that!

The smaller of the two buildings was a one-story stucco affair for the lower grades. When you "graduated" to the



Courtesy photo

big building for fourth grade, you stopped playing with the kids in the little building. We had a certain code of honor and status to enforce just like grown-ups.

However, the smaller school had one very redeeming quality, a modest but beautifully built theater/auditorium, at the far end of the building. We used to gather on the concrete steps coming out of the theater for all our school pictures, shortest kids in front, taller ones in back.

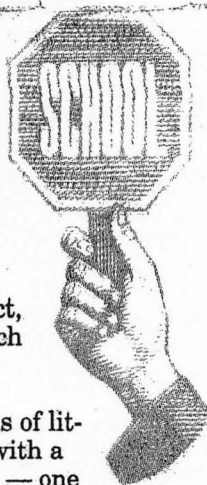
Though the theater might have been small, it was the hub of lively activity, and an announce-

SCHOOL DAYS

ment that class was going to "assembly" was always met with great enthusiasm.

Assembly might mean listening to bigger kids singing in the glee club, practicing for plays which we put on for our parents or even watching traveling variety shows that went from school to school. These might be a magician doing acts that involved calling up someone from the audience, contortionists who could bend themselves practically double, or some sweet, young women who could sing like a song bird.

You never really knew what to expect, and that's what made assembly so much fun!



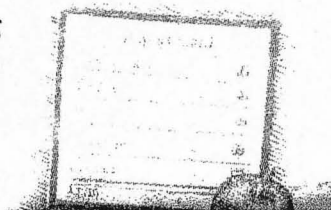
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The hard-working, taxpaying citizens of little Fairfield provided the school yard with a frugal choice of playground equipment — one set of steel monkey bars, one steel slide, four steel chained swings, and one steel merry-go-round that you pushed full speed, then hopped on for a free ride until it creaked to a halt, which was usually about 1½ revolutions.

That was it, all the facilities in the recreation yard, with the exception of a large baseball field fringed in a few tufts of stubborn grass outside the base paths, next to the wooden school house. The rest of our recreation during recess was left up to our imaginations, but that's one thing of which we had plenty.

At recess, a pair of teachers patrolled the grounds with big, black police whistles hung around their feminine necks. When infractions were observed, the whistle went to their mouth, and a loud, ear piercing "T-W-E-E-T!" would penetrate the screech of excited voices. The viola-

tor was pointed out and told to cease and desist. The instant you saw it was not you being "tweeted," you went back to whatever recreational pursuit you'd been doing, such as chasing girls, playing tag, or telling tall tales. I especially liked the first one . . . those strange creatures called girls. Hmmm? That would take some looking into.

But through all the natural turmoil of adolescence, there was



magic in that old school, and that magic was two very special teachers who's personality and unique style of teaching made a tremendous impression on me. No, I would not turn out to be an academic genius due to them, but they made school fascinating and learning fun in their own special way.

They were unlike any other teachers I would ever have again in 12 years of public school education. To put it simply, they both had a God-given "gift," a natural talent you rarely find in this difficult profession. Fifty years later, I remember Mrs. Gordon and Mrs. Nitzel as if it were yesterday.

■ ■ ■

In physical appearance, these two women were exact opposites. Mrs. Gordon was short, small of build, almost skinny, with dark, tightly curled hair. She wore plain or flowery dresses most of the time.

She had darting eyes, and that kind of busy, inquisitive personality that made you feel important when she was talking to you. When a question was before the class, she brought *everyone* into the solving of it. She didn't put one person on the spot, everyone staring as he or she struggled for the answer. Hands flew up as the entire class pondered the question, and everyone wanted to get in on that answer, each adding something that helped achieve the final solution. It was nothing short of euphoric!

Mrs. Nitzel, on the other hand, seemed to possess a magic that stemmed directly from her sheer, natural beauty. She was tall and physically trim, walked with her shoulders straight back, and had a slow, all-knowing smile. When she looked at you with her piercing, light blue eyes, it was like being hit with a laser beam. You locked onto those eyes of hers, and the rest of the world disappeared.

She wore her gray/blonde hair pulled straight back into a tight bun, framed by an unwrinkled, serene face. She always wore smart suits with stylish heels. The self-assured manner in which she conducted herself would be perfectly described in a single word from the 1950s . . . pure cool!

enormous crush on Mrs. Nitzel, and when you're 8, that's pretty difficult to admit, much less understand. Of course, I never told anyone about my feelings, but continued to watch her every move in the classroom, and raised my hand as much as possible so she would come over to my desk and talk to me.

Her teaching approach was quiet and easy going. She never threatened, never raised her voice in exasperation. This low pressure style was mirrored in her students. It was a time to be quiet, relax a bit, and simply study. But I'd have to admit that she was one of the most beautiful women I've ever seen. She had a timeless kind of beauty, and even today, I could not tell you if she was 30, 45 or 60.

■ ■ ■

One day at school we were given an earth shattering announcement. The school, both buildings, the playgrounds, all were shutting down completely. After one more week, we were all to report to a brand new school just finished on the far, eastern end of town, which was named Fairfield Elementary, situated just beyond the Armi-jo Union High School football field, wherever that was.

I was devastated. I'd been going there since third grade, loved my teachers and pals, and was simply happy right there. It was also close to home, an easy 15 minute bike ride away.

I didn't care about any shiny new school, full of new kids and teachers I didn't know, some place past the high school where I'd never been.

I pondered the move and spent that last week in a deep depression. Then the weekend came, and we played, rode our bikes out in the country, went to the Saturday matinee and watched our favorite serial, Batman and Robin. So what if their costumes were a little bit baggy? Life got back to normal. Life was good once again.

Come Monday, I grabbed my sack lunch, mounted my bike, and headed off for school again just as I'd done for years. I sped down Madison across Texas, on to Delaware, then across the street heading for the school yard bike rack . . .

but wait a minute. The place was totally empty. There wasn't a living soul anywhere in sight. Was I *that* early? Maybe it was a holiday? Where was everybody anyway?

I peddled over to one of the ground-floor windows and peered in. The seats were cold and empty, the blackboards wiped clean. Suddenly I felt like the last person on the planet, an eerie, lonely feeling.

Then, from out of the blue, it finally hit me. I was at the *wrong school* and had about 1½ miles to pump to find the new one! Even worse, I would be late. I streaked across the play yard, jumped the curb and hit the pavement with gravel flying!

■ ■ ■

Today, our old war project home would sit somewhere behind the Civic Center. If I tried to ride across the grassy oval now, I'd end up in the big middle of the Civic Center pond. The old Bunny mansion is still there, but it was turned into an orthodontist's office.

The buildings that once comprised my beloved grammar school have long since been bulldozed flat and hauled away in dump trucks.

In their place are nondescript buildings that look like trailers with windows cut in. It's called Sem Yeto High School, but to tell you the truth, I liked the old school far better. It "looked" like a real school, like something that would last 30, 40 or 50 years.

I never saw Mrs. Gordon or Mrs. Nitzel again. I don't know if they were sent off to work at other schools or simply stopped teaching, but I never forgot either of them.

I missed them, their wonderful ways in the classrooms, Mrs. Gordon's free-for-all involvement on knotty problems, Mrs. Nitzel's quiet understanding of kids trying to learn at a most tender and impressionable age.

Of course, I still have an enormous crush on that stunningly beautiful lady with the blond/white hair, and light blue eyes. I guess I always will.

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By Art Isberg

of the Daily Republic

P UTAH CREEK - No viable waterway wide enough to skip a flat rock across in low water August could go unnoticed in Northern California's dry coastal mountains, even before white settlers called this place California or the mountains had a name.

For as long as the winding waterway has flowed out of the high, coastal mountains, down through rocky canyons and finally out to the flat, oak-studded valley where it would meet a mighty river that ran to the sea, great winter runs of silver-backed salmon and steelhead trout have fought their way up its muddy, roaring waters.

Along the creeks stony banks, the first settlers built their willow hut villages, trapped and speared fish, devoured their flesh and dried what they couldn't immediately consume.

In the last and biggest of these valleys, a place that some day would be called Monticello, one of the largest concentrations of Indian people made their creekside home. This quiet, hidden land served them well. They hunted rabbit and quail, ducks and blacktail deer. They gathered acorns and tubers, and whatever else the bountiful land would yield.

When the first white settlers came riding into the big valley many centuries later, they also put down their roots right along side the same waterway, which they would name Putah Creek.

The very first time I saw the creek was in the middle 1940s, just as World War II came to a climactic end. My mother and I drove up from Fairfield to take a look. For me, fascinated as I was with the outdoors, and especially the chance to go fishing, it was pure, unadulterated love at first sight!

As our 1932 wooden-spoke Plymouth coup came winding out of the hills after an hour of driving by orchards and ranch houses along Cherry Glen Road, we rolled down to

something called Low Water Bridge, a long concrete slab poured from one bank to the other sticking about four feet above the water. Several large culverts in the slab allowed the creek to flow through.

In winter, when incessant storms racked the high coastal mountains that drained into the vast watershed, Putah Creek turned into a savage torrent of roaring, brown waves 150 feet across, and the bridge vanished under 15 feet of dark, thundering water, and stayed that way for months.

Then in spring the rains stopped, the water receded once again, and Putah Creek became a clear, quiet, rock-lined waterway tumbling from pool to pool, filled with fat and gaily colored bluegill perch and dark, slender smallmouth bass. I haunted the creek every weekend I could talk my mom into taking me up there, and begged her to let me "stay over," camping out at my favorite fishing hole, Recreation Beach.

Pinpoint of civilization

On the whole of its length between the country town of Winters and the tinier town of Monticello, Recreation Beach was the only pinpoint of civilization on the entire length of the creek.

A large, rotund Sam Silvie owned "the beach," which consisted of a big building with a tin roof that looked like a barn more than anything else, with an old wooden dance floor in the back. In the front of the building he ran a big, wooden bar with a few racks of groceries along one wall. Out back were half a dozen rough camp sites with a three tables and rock lined fire pits.

In all the years I hung out there, I don't ever remember seeing the camps full up. Two or three people meant there was a crowd.

Sam and I worked out a deal of sorts. Because I was up there so much, he assigned me the job of picking up trash and all the empty soda bottles I could find on Sunday afternoon.

The trash went into a 50 gallon oil drum, the bottles I returned to the bar and traded for one, ice cold bottle of soda water of my choice. My favorite was Delaware Punch. If customers were "bending an elbow," Sam would retrieve my free drink from the cooler then announce in a loud voice, "One Delaware Punch coming up!"

This would generally turn every head in the place to see who was drinking such sissy stuff, but I got quite a kick out of it. I liked Sam. He was a boisterous guy with a gentle side to his nature, and a soft spot for a kid trying to earn an icy soda pop while the mercury slowly climbed to 90, 95, and even 100 degrees in that windless, frying pan summer valley.

I trampled the creek both up and downstream and knew every fishing hole worth fishing,

what time of the day fishing was best, and what flies worked best on what species.

I even began tying my own flies, and sometimes took my equipment with me up to the creek, clamping my fly-tying vice to a picnic table and turning out a new creation right on the spot. These generally matched some bug or insect I'd just seen fish take moments earlier. Then I'd tie it on my rod and dash back down to the creek to see how effective it was.

Partner on the creek

On rare occasion, a pal who had adventurous parents would let him stay overnight with me, but it had to be someone with a camping outfit to match my own. Mine consisted of a war surplus G.I. sleeping bag and a frying pan. I traveled pretty light in those days, although, today I can't leave the city limits of Fairfield without the services of a 24 1 / 2 foot motor home!

Sometimes my mom would give me two quarters for a back-up to stave off starvation and if I ran out of food, I could go up the store and buy a bag of cookies and a Delaware Punch. I could last at least one week on this unlikely combination, and also found they went well with a campsite and fried fish dinner . . . after you got the hang of it.

In a strange twist of things, Putah Creek has played and still plays a big part in my life, although almost every thing about it has changed dramatically. When I grew old enough to buy my very first car, I still went camping and fishing back at the creek.

In the 1950s, the Bureau of Reclamation began the Monticello Dam project and fresh out of Armijo Union High School, I got a job with the bureau on survey parties, actually being paid to go back and work at my old, boyhood haunts along the creek.

Love by the creek

Because our survey office and truck yard was located in Winters, I reported there for work every day and, as fate would have it, I met and married a pretty, young high school girl from that town, named Delores. She's put up with the idiosyncrasies of a writer for 38 years now, and I love her even more today than that first day I wheeled my '55 Chevy Bel Air along side the curb and tried to get her to talk to me - it took a week before she even cracked a smile!

Our three sons all fish Putah Creek or the huge lake that formed when they dammed Devil's Gate, just around the bend from Recreation Beach, but all that changed too. The icy waters discharged from the bottom of the lake killed off all the warm water bluegill and smallmouth bass I chased as a kid, and now the creek is only stocked with planted trout raised in a fish hatchery.

The quiet bar I knew at Recreation Beach has grown into a full scale, year round trailer park, with fancy camping facilities, a big store, and even a security guard to let you in

and out of the place. I wonder what old Sam would think of that?

Because I worked on the dam and the miles of concrete laterals that spread south to bring water and irrigation to so many communities and farms, you could say I had a heavy hand in the undoing of my own boyhood memories. But I still have those memories.

And I always will. You see, when I think of Putah Creek I don't see a great, manmade concrete wall thrown up across Devil's Gate, or the little community of Monticello buried under rolling, green waves, never to be seen again.

Instead, I always envision a long sundown with deep shadows slowly creeping up the steep canyon walls. I'm standing barefoot, knee deep in water with my Levi's rolled up as far as I can, swishing my big ``Duster" out over the glass smooth waters. Then the first, rippling breeze of evening comes whispering down the canyon breaking the hammer lock of intense July heat, cooling my brow.

I fish until the first, faint stars begin twinkling on high up over the purpled canyon walls, casting now more to the sound of fish slashing the water as they feed rather than the sight of them. I don't want to quit, but finally I must.

I wade out, hike up the bank back to my ``camp," light a dancing fire and roll out my sleeping bag close to it. Eventually, I crawl inside, watch the fire flicker lower, lower, then stare at the icy stars wondering if anyone is looking back, until I fall asleep.

Tomorrow is another day of high adventure out on Putah Creek, and I can't wait for the dawn . . .

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for E1 Sunday, Oct. 2

By Art Isberg

Special to the Daily Republic

SUISUN CITY - One warm and lovely June morning 40 years ago I awoke to a wonderful new world - the night before, 92 teenagers and I graduated from Armijo Union High School.

For me, there would be no college or junior college. At long last, I was done with school. I was free of its boring routines, uninteresting classes and demanding teachers. It felt absolutely wonderful!

Finishing high school was actually one of those great milestones - it ranked right up there with asking that special girl to marry you, or staring in awe through the nursery window at your firstborn child, all red and wrinkled, or stepping through the front door of the very first house you ever bought.

This was something to lay in bed for a while and really think about . . . what now? What did I want to do? What did I know how to do?

I rolled over and pulled a Lucky Strike out of the nightstand pack and then lighted it. As I watched the smoke curl up into the sun streaming through the bedroom window of our old ranch house in Lagoon Valley, it hit me.

Before I did anything, before I could even "afford" to do anything, I'd have to go out and find myself a job. I'd have to make some dinero, scratch, change - some coin of the realm. I needed money and I needed it now.

Fairfield 40 summers ago didn't offer a great deal in the way of a job market, especially for someone unskilled, untrained and fresh out of high school. The Korean War had just ended, and the young men coming home snapped up what few jobs there were.

A pal of mine, Don, and I were riding around one day when we crossed the railroad tracks into Suisun City. At that very moment, hearing the thud of car tires over steel rails, I came down with a brainstorm.

“Let's drive over to the yardmaster's office and see if Southern Pacific is hiring anyone,” I suggested.

Finally, a job!

We drove along the tracks to a small building with the sign Yardmaster nailed over the front door. Inside, the yardmaster himself sat behind a big desk in a dark and dusty office, further shaded by Venetian blinds. He was a big man, wearing a fedora and dark sunglasses, though it was the middle of summer and he was inside. He reminded me of a stereotypical southern sheriff, sitting all alone in that dingy office, not saying much, and downright suspicious of the two 17-year-olds standing in front of him.

“What can you two do?” he finally asked abruptly, after eying our abbreviated job applications.

“Anything you need,” I blurted out, kidding myself and hoping I was also getting away with it.

Anything, huh . . . you two boys report Monday morning right down their across the tracks from the roundhouse. I'll put you on the steel gang . . . you'll be gandy dancers,” he said without cracking a smile.

I shot a quick glance at Don, and could see he didn't know what a “gandy dancer” was, either, and neither of us was about to ask. It might just be enough to cut and run even before we got started.

Still stunned by our instant job-hunting success, I managed to blurt out one final question.

“What's the pay?”

“Sixty-eight dollars every two weeks,” the big man answered.

“We'll be here Monday,” I promised, then we turned and walked out the door.

Man, this was great. We were about to embark on our working careers and get steady paychecks with a big, prestigious outfit such as Southern Pacific.

Oh, were we!

A gandy dancer

Monday came up bright and July hot. I picked up Don at his house in Suisun City, then drove the three short blocks to the ``yard." We parked, lighted up smokes, and wondered what was next.

Just before eight o'clock the foreman drove in and unlocked the big, orange flatbed work truck, then fired it up. We got out, walked over and introduced ourselves as ``new meat."

He said precious little, nodding toward the back of the truck.

``Get in," he pointed, then turned to climb the cab step. Well, I guess introductions weren't really that important right at the start. We'd get to know each other better later . . . sure we would.

We grabbed our lunch buckets and walked around the back of the truck to climb up. There were 13 black men sitting back there staring at us two white guys climbing in. In a few moments there were also two different worlds sitting at opposite ends of the same seats. The truck lurched forward. We were off to work on the railroad.

After hitting the highway in stony silence, I decided it was time to break the ice.

``Anyone know where we're going?" I leaned forward looking into the shadow of men up front.

``We goin' up to Dixon . . . to lay steel rail . . . you boys ever lay any steel?"

``Uhhh . . . Well, no, we've never laid steel rails before but, man, we can learn, just like you guys did." That brought on a few muffled laughs, even though I didn't think it was very funny.

``Yeah, well, you two be workin' on the road today . . . you know what that means?" another man asked.

I admitted I didn't, and was told the word ``road" was Southern Pacific's term for its tracks and the right-of-way that ran along both sides of it. No one said railroad. It was simply the road.

Later we took the Dixon turn-off then drove several more miles until it paralleled the tracks. About two miles outside the town itself, Jay the foreman, slowed and wheeled off the blacktop coming to a stop in tall weeds. Everyone piled out.

A real scorcher

The morning sun was climbing now, the air dead still. You could smell the summer tanned aroma of toasted wild oats, feel the burn of real heat through the back of your

shirt. It was going to be another real scorcher.

"Hey! You two new guys. Grab a spike mall and puller each and get up to the road," the foreman was pointing.

I hefted the 25-pound puller bar over one shoulder and hooked the mall in the crook of my other arm. Then I started up the steep bank through tall weeds to the gleaming, wheel polished, steel rails.

Once atop the road, the heat instantly doubled, bouncing off the shining rails. The thick bed of gravel that the ties and rails were laid on radiated it right back up in your face like brickets in a barbecue. The instant you bent down to use your tools, sweat began popping out on your face . . . and it was only 9 a.m.

Our project for the day was to take up old, worn rails, and replace them with heavy, wooden ties and newer, thicker steel. This had to be done inside a strict and limited time frame, between the schedule of passing freight and passenger trains, which meant fast, steady and back breaking hand labor.

The heavy, steel puller bar was wedged under the old, thumb thick spikes to pry them up and out. Then the worn section of rail was lifted straight up off the plates by a dozen sets of rail tongs, evenly spaced along its length, two men to a tong. These looked something like ice tongs, except larger and longer and without the pointed ends, each man opposite the other. The harder you strained to lift, the more pressure was put on the jaws of the tong to hold solid under the rail lip.

All this heavy, rail lifting and moving was done under the rhythmic song of the oldest black man on the gang. Hoppee sang a chant everyone knew and understood but Don and myself. All we could do was watch the man in front of us and do what they did. Through this strange, melodious song, they knew when to lift, when to walk, when to stop.

The 11 a.m. sun rose higher in the sky. I had to take a break. I had to have a drink. It wasn't even noon yet, and I was already just about played out.

"Water sick"

The gleaming, aluminum water canister strapped to the side of the work truck was filled with crystal chunks of ice to cool the water just 100 tempting feet away. I told Don I was going down for a drink and he said he was, too.

"Don't drink it, boy," one of the black men next to me said without looking up.

"What'd you say?" I asked.

"Don't go down there and drink or you'll never make it to lunch . . . once you start you

can't stop . . . 'specially a new boy like you. You'll get water sick."

"I gotta have a drink. I'm goin'," I said, and Don followed me down the bank to the shady side of the truck.

We pulled down the little paper cups from their holder, filled them to the top, then poured them down our throats without even swallowing . . . one cup . . . two cups . . . three . . . God, I couldn't quit!

Finally I stopped. I don't know how many cups later, but I knew I felt like hell, a growing knot in the pit of my stomach. I made it to lunch, but didn't eat. Instead, Don and I laid down on the seats in the back of the truck in shade and prayed for quitting time. So this was the railroad, huh?

And if I thought the morning was misery, the afternoon was even worse, the heat building until the men up and down the line looked like so many dancing images, swaying to the undulating rise of heat waves . . . gandy dancers . . . Is that what it meant?

How hot was it? 95 - 100 - 105? I don't know, but I bet it could have fried a lizard. It was frying me, and even worse, I couldn't stay off that damn water jug, which only made it more miserable.

Yet, every time I straightened up to suck in a lung full of hot air, and give my screaming muscles a break, there were those black men, still bent over, spike mallets flashing in the afternoon sun, the endless ring of steel hitting steel, as they worked on throughout that long, smoldering, summer afternoon. They had the cadence. They had the pace. I did not. I still had to learn it. I had to learn how to ride the heat or quit. I wasn't going to quit. No matter what.

Finally, mercifully, sometime later I heard the long, loud, ``tweeeeeet!" of the foreman's whistle, the signal to pick up all tools, the signal that this day, at last, was done.

I shuffled back down off the road, put my tools up in the bin, then slowly pulled myself up the steel step into the back of the truck. I laid down and closed my eyes. I didn't have to move anymore, and it felt so good to do absolutely nothing that I almost went to sleep.

Back at the yard, I tossed my lunch bucket and its uneaten sandwich in the back seat of my car and took Don home. We didn't say much. There wasn't much to say except, ``See ya tomorrow." Then I started for home out in Lagoon Valley.

When I got there Mom was fixing dinner, but I didn't eat. I couldn't eat. I was too tired and my stomach still felt like I'd swallowed a bowling ball.

Instead, I took an ice cold bath to cool down, then wrapped a towel around myself and went to my bedroom laying out on top of the covers underneath the open window. I prayed for a sundown summer breeze, any breeze, any breath of moving air. It stirred,

ever so gently, and I began to feel like I'd live at least one more day.

Did I go back? Yes. For the next year, through summer's blinding heat, fall's ice cold north wind, and winter's freezing rain down the back of my neck. I went back and became a ``gandy dancer," and a good one, I think. I learned the invaluable worth of earning an honest dollar and doing a day's work, the hardest kind of work a man can do.

Today, the gandy dancer is gone, except in the remotest places. Now, big steel machines on steel wheels, fixed with black hydraulic lines, slowly roll down the tracks and do all the back breaking jobs we once did. Thirteen black men and Don and I.

What a team. What a job. What they taught me was invaluable. It must be . . . it's worked for the last 40 years.

Copy Story to Production

Paper route recollections

Maxine's Beauty Shop, Chico's Barber Shop,
trailer park good for a few sales



Courtesy photo/DOWNTOWN IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT

Abe Bautista's route covered Texas Street. He used to earn a 3-to-5 cent commission per paper.

"A long time ago at about the age of 11 years old, I once considered Texas Street to be the longest street in the world. You see, West Texas street was the direction I took when I embarked in my first business venture into the world of direct marketing. At the tender age of 11, I walked from Webster and Texas to the Solano County Hospital located at the west end of Texas street and back to the Greyhound Bus Depot located at Jefferson and Texas. Because I had no allowance for movies, ice cream, candy, etc., I took the initiative to sell Fairfield's only newspaper, The Solano Republican, door-to-door. My friend (Hassie) Jim Hasbrouck's mother worked for the Solano Republican and we would walk the entire Texas Street selling newspapers. In those days, metal newsstands were non-existent and paper routes were more prevalent. One well known route was handled by the Pace brothers who lived across the street from our family on Broadway Street. They used a "high tech method"

by delivering newspapers on motor scooters and their papers were folded like German hand grenades that allowed you to throw the paper a mile. They were the envy of all newspaper routes on bicycles.

Hassie eventually quit selling newspapers for a newspaper route, so I had all of Texas street as my territory. After school, I would stop by the Solano Republican news office and pick up 20 papers. The reason for 20 was that you would receive a 3-to-5 cent commission on each paper plus you would qualify for a free movie pass for a Saturday afternoon movie matinee at the Chief Cinema on Jackson and Texas street. I would walk west on Texas street into Witt's Barber Shop for a sale. Then I would proceed past the theater to make plans for a upcoming movie and into Sprouse-Ritz for customers coming out of the dime store. Sometimes I would proceed off Texas on to Jackson Street for customers from the American Trust Company Bank (Wells

Fargo) and the Fairfield Laundry. Back on to Texas I would walk into Woolworth and eat a huge ice cream sandwich that was a 4 inch square made with Neapolitan ice cream. This was a major stop if you were in the downtown area of Texas street. I would then cross the street to Barboza's Gas Station with a Flying Red Horse, the American Auto Parts Store and then into Paul's Barber Shop. Across Texas on the corner was Myrick's Chevron Gas Station located next to Judge Crowley's house and the Morril residence. The customers were really good and would buy my newspapers. Next, I would walk into a pawnshop that had all kinds of instruments and things, but they would never buy. I then would then cross the street past three small similar looking homes and into a liquor store. Next was a oriental grocery and restaurant. Sometimes I would go to the 76 Union gas station and talk to Mr. Harold Bakee. He knew my dad and he would repair our '59 Chevrolet. He

would buy a newspaper before I would go into Maxine's Beauty Shop and then to another gas station. After crossing Pennsylvania, I would sell papers in the Farmers Market store and then go to Chico's Barber Shop for more customers. Finally, I would stop into the Fairfield Grocery and sell a few papers and go to my best customers located in a nearby trailer park. This park still remains today after all these years. At the park, I would go door-to-door and the majority of the trailer park customers would buy. Sometimes, I had to go back to the Solano Republican office and pick up additional newspapers. The trailer park was good for 10-15 additional newspapers.

At the end of the day around 5 p.m., I would return to the Daily Republican office to collect my commissions of approximately \$2 to \$3 plus my movie passes. I would then go next door to the Western Auto Store and buy equipment for my bicycle. Sometimes I would go to Loren's Fountain (Meyers) and order a shake or see if my cousins were in there with their friends. Crossing at Webster and Texas, I would walk to the cookie bakery by passing Woodard Chevrolet and the Food Fair Grocery. There I would spend my hard-earned change on cookies and donuts. Across the street was the Garben Hardware where I would buy metal bolts and nuts as fishing sinkers. Walking west on Texas street past Webster you would walk into the Bank of America and then J.C. Penney's (Gordons Music). Sometimes I would go into Freitas Clothing store and past the best 5-10 cent dime store in town. Freitas was the only store in town that carried Levi brand jean products.

Located across from the movie theater was the greatest candy dime store in the whole world. If you grew up in Fairfield, you would recognize this store. It had every candy, toy and comic you could imagine. The people were real friendly and everybody knew who you were if you were a regular. It was a real treat to stop here before you attended a movie matinee. I could remember: Aba-zabas, Red Hots, Almond Joy, Snickers, Mounds, Milk Duds, Jaw Breakers, Jr. Mints, Tootsie Rolls, Tootsie Pops, Look, Big Hunk, Cracker Jacks,

Jujubees, Bazooka, Kits, Baseball Cards, Licorice, Sweet Tarts, Root Beer Barrels, Sour Sticks, Rollos, Sugar Daddy, Sugar Babies, wax lips, wax mustache, toys, magazines, etc. This was kids' heaven and all for less than 25 cents. The second greatest candy dime store was the D-C Variety Store on North Texas street presently occupied by Santella and Associates. This dime store serviced not only the neighborhood and the parishioners of Holy Spirit Catholic Church, but the entire schools of Holy Spirit and Fairfield Elementary. It was the premier AM/PM store. It was even busy while school was in session for those that were absent from classroom.

Enough about remembering Texas street as a kid, but I do want to mention that Bill's Barber Shop on Jackson and Texas street was a neat place to have a hair cut. The Shopping Bag Grocery store and Food Fair were the only downtown grocery stores on Texas street, besides a butcher shop next door to the Freitas Clothing store across from the theater. Considering what Texas street was before and what it is today brings back many memories of good times such as the Annual July Fourth Parade and riding the Solano County fire trucks down Texas Street.

The revitalization of downtown area has been a tremendous commitment on the part of the city to preserve our past and promote the future.

The action of redevelopment of the Wonder World area is a step in a positive direction to preserve and maintain a tremendous area that is worth saving from blight, graffiti, and economic disaster of vacant boarded buildings and lots full of weeds and trash. Texas Street belongs to all of us and we should all take pride in making and maintaining this commercial street as a productive strip of real estate that we can all enjoy and feel safe in.

As a long-time resident who was born in Bunny Hospital and delivered by the Mayor, I commend those who take pride in a personal identification with Texas Street and want it to be maintained as major city street that depicts the diversity of culture in businesses as a "nice place to live, work, shop and play."

I remember when . . .

"I remember when a snowman was built on Texas Street! It was either late 1959 or early 1960. A group of us from Armijo hauled my dad's utility trailer to the snow, filled it full, brought it back and built the largest snowman Fairfield probably ever saw! We built it right in the middle of the street, under the arch. It was very impromptu, and the police even helped direct traffic around us (and that was when Texas Street was also Highway 12)."

— Janelle Pritchard Hawkins,
Fairfield

"I remember when my dog "Punch," a pure white boxer, and I would hop into my '29 model-A pickup and cruise up to "Sids" Drive-in on the corner of North Texas and Travis Boulevard and order two milk shakes. That was in the '50's — boy, those were the days!"

— Bill Cupp,
Suisun

"I remember when I was pregnant the summer of 1951 and my husband had been recalled to active duty and sent to a base called Travis near a town called Fairfield. My memories of Fairfield have never faded since our short stay of 11 months.

I remember when Fairfield boasted one major signal near the County Court House...I remember the arch being the most significant landmark in town...the corner ice cream shop where the forbidden indulgence of a chocolate soda or chocolate malt was so enjoyable after a check up at the GYN clinic on base knowing I had another month before a "weighting in". . . the only department store was a J.C. Penney's store and close to that was a wonderful hardware store. Home...ah such a delight! That was a leftover low housing unit left over from???...a long building consisting of four units. Each had one bedroom, a living room, a HUGE kitchen and the bathroom complete with a tin shower! What a deal for so little rent . . . I REALLY remember the fragrance of the onion fields in Vacaville when the winds flew that aroma our way.

But, most of all, a circle has been completed within our family experiencing living in Fairfield. That link started back in the '40s during the war when I was 15 and time to learn how to drive. Gasoline was rationed and the only chance to get experience in handling a car was to drive whenever or wherever my parents would travel. Thus, I accompanied my father on a business trip up to Fairfield. The business trip concerned the building of Travis AFB.

The only hotel to stay in was at Isla Vista, so the "I remember when" started long before 1951. The link to close the circle occurred a few years ago when my daughter and her family moved into Rancho Solano a few years ago. Every time I visit with the family fond memories are refreshed and relived, even though I cannot find Waterman Place due to growth and progress of Airfield."

— Nancy Hall-Gerell,
Honolulu

"I remember Fairfield's first miniature golf course on the south side of the 1200 block of Texas Street. It was built by Tom Smith, who lived next door. Arne Digured ran the service station. The Smith home was later sold to the Paul Bender family and the house was moved to Maryland Street. There are several stores and a service station at the other corner now."

— Ruth Hagermann
Fairfield

"I remember when boardwalks and planks lined the "dirt" Main Street. I recall the hitching posts and water trough for the hors-

I remember when . . .

es. There were many stores interspersed with houses and picket fences. At the east end was the courthouse built the same year that I was born.

A few years later Armijo Union High School was built (now the Hall of Justice). At the south end of the building was the County Library and the north end was the auditorium, scene of many town and school performances as well as school classes.

On the courthouse grounds was the post office and the city park where the town band practiced often in the gazebo.

Across the street was the firehouse and next to that building was the firemen's hall where all important town events were held. (Later years the scene of U.S.O. dances where many of our town girls met their future husbands).

The Capitol Hotel was west of the park on the corner. The First National Bank had marble floors (onyx from Tolin Springs north of town). Many times my husband delivered onyx to the trains (a major hotel in San Francisco also has floors of the same material).

There were many good stores. When we ordered groceries, they were delivered. We put a sign in the window when we wanted ice for our wooden ice boxes.

If we passed Valladao's Saloon and the doors swing open, there was a blast of potent aromas. We exhaled properly but, of course, some passerby lived dangerously and inhaled.

Meyer's Bakery was dear to my heart. Many goodies and a popular penny candy counter. Mrs. Meyers was from Germany and my grandmother also, so Mrs. Meyer and my mother had a common bond. They visited in the back parlor and we enjoyed sweet rolls or fresh doughnuts.

Mr. Meyers had a heavy German accent and he seemed to be always white from his round baker's cap and pale face to his shoes — a real flour snowman I thought.

* There were quite a few homes on Texas Street with pickets or wire fences surrounding the. It was pleasant to walk along and greet the neighbors when we went "down town."

Lots of good memories of old Texas Street!

— **Vera Oliver,**
Fairfield

"I remember when . . . downtown Fairfield WAS Fairfield and I walked the distance between my home on the far west end of Utah Street to Armijo High School about 180 times a year. American Graffiti had nothing on us. We had a strip that went from the Dairy Queen (now the Jelly Donut) to Foster's Freeze on North Texas. In between was shopping/entertainment amenity that anyone could possibly want. The Fairfield Cinema offered one first-run movie every week and who could watch more than one anyway. Movie snacks could be purchased across the street at the corner variety store for about half the theater prices. Big Hunks and Sugar Babies could last a whole movie

(and these were the candy bars). After the movie you could go to Loren's Fountain (on the corner of Texas and Webster Streets), The Airline Cafe (now Six Fortunes Restaurant) where model aircraft hung from the ceiling and the German owner may have received her training slinging mugs in a Hof Brau House, or Flaky Cream Donuts for those sophisticated enough to drink coffee. Downtown Fairfield had it all. J.C. Penney's, two hardware stores, Garben and Pinkerton's, jewelry, shoes, and clothing. Hyde's Department Store (now the Goodwill) was our small-town version of Macy's, carrying all name brands. In the early '60s, downtown nearly doubled its retail size when the south side of the 900 block was developed in one sweep. The impact was enormous. All at once we had Gallenkamp Shoes, Woolworth's, The Toy Shop, Gensler-Lee Jewelers, Arden's Women's Clothes and several others. The shopping opportunities in downtown nearly doubled overnight. I was late getting home from school a lot after that. During the '60s, the music scene was changing rapidly, and being in such close proximity to San Francisco was an advantage. Downtown had two music stores that I remember, Simonds Music (which also sold refrigerators alongside the 45s) and Kirgin's Music (for the serious musician), which sold guitars, drums and tambourines. I spent a fair amount of time in both. Mrs. Simonds comes into my shop occasionally, and she is always pleasantly surprised that I remember her. Her shop occupied part of the building that my shop does now. It is such a small town experience to go to work each day to the same store-front location that gave me such delight as a child."

— **Darcia Tipton, co-owner of**
Fabricant, 846 Texas Street, Fairfield

"In 1983 while looking at Fairfield as a place to live, my husband and I got lost on North Texas Street trying to find our way back to Interstate 80 when we found 'plain old Texas Street.' We were moving from an area outside Los Angeles that had no downtown. When I saw downtown and the arch, I told my husband 'This is it — Fairfield feels like home.' I remember when . . . that same arch was taken down in the late '80s for refinishing — restoring it to the original dark blue and gold — from its faded, dull, gray-blue color."

— **Sue McManus, owner of The Market**
Place and Uniques, 902 Texas Street,
Fairfield

"I remember when . . . I was a student at Holy Spirit school and we lined Texas Street in front of the church to watch the Clydesdales come down the street when Anheuser Busch first came to town."

— **Peggy O'Brien, co-owner of O'Brien**
Travel, 710 Madison Street, Fairfield

"I remember when . . . Diamond National Lumber Company was located in downtown Fairfield at the corner of Texas and Madison Streets in the 1950s. There were still wooden sidewalks and hitchin' posts for horses. Much of that block was later razed (late 1950s) with F.W. Woolworth's occupying Diamond National's old sight. Those 'new' buildings still exist with American Home Furnishings now on that corner.

I once delivered the monthly Solano Theater (now Fairfield Cinema at the east corner of Texas and Jackson Streets) 'Playbill' to neighborhoods in Fairfield and Suisun. In those days it was a 'big deal' to receive. This was in the mid-1950s and I was about 12 years old. It was a great way to earn a little extra money and get free passes to the theater, or so I thought! If my memory serves me right, I received \$3 and six passes for several hard hours of 'pounding the pavement' delivering hundreds of those flyers from house to house. And here's the rest of the story: While on my rounds I got bit by a dog and had to have a tetanus shot that cost more than the money I earned that day! Needless to say that was the first and last time I delivered those flyers! Next profession: paper route.

J.C. Penney's moved from their old downtown Fairfield location (now the home of Gordon's Music) in the early 1970s to its new location. The store is noteworthy in two ways: 1. It was first to locate at what is now Solano Mall and stood alone for 10 years before any other stores were built and 2. It had the first escalator in Fairfield! Ah, history!

Around the late 1950s, the cars would 'spill' out into the streets at Sid's Drive-in (at North Texas Street and Travis Boulevard) on Friday and Saturday nights. If you were first in, you were last out, because you couldn't move until everyone else left. Two regular high school weekday lunch stops for me were Loren's Fountain (current site of Meyer's jewelers) or Fairfield Fountain in downtown Fairfield . . . "Ketchup, fries and a cherry coke" for 50 cents or maybe a hamburger, fries and "suicide" for a little more.

— **Ken Kuralca (Armijo High Class of**
1960), Fairfield

Model T kid on Texas

Special delivery boy earned 8 cents per letter in 1938

"I remember . . . Texas Street during the '30s and '40s:

April 1934: Fairfield business district was two blocks long with several vacant lots on Texas Street. The movie theater at Jackson Street cost 10 cents and had a large organ from the silent movie era. The 5 cent ice cream cone and candy store is now that theater's office.

Al Witt had not yet remodeled the barber shop. Continuing east on the south side of Texas Street were the old bars and the Solano Republican (newspaper) with Mr. Weir. Between Webster and Jefferson were the Ford auto dealer and Woodard's Chevrolet. Late fall would have kids running down Texas Street when word spread the new models had arrived.

The north side of Texas Street at Jackson Street had Morrisons Grocery and Fratise butcher shop. The frozen food locker wasn't built until late '30s. Continuing east was Evans and Pyle Hardware which had everything from dinnerware, bicycles and horseshoes to nuts, bolts and kerosene. Next was J.C. Penney with tag lines that shot the money and order to the mezzanine for change.

I remember when . . .

The title company occupied the classic mission architecture building at the corner of Webster. The north side on toward Jefferson Street had Goosmans, later Garbins Hardware, the three-story office building with the first elevator in Fairfield and had the post office on the first floor. I received 8 cents a letter as Fairfield special delivery mail boy on bicycle from 1938 until 1942, then assistant manager of the Standard gas station at the northwest corner of Texas and Madison during the manpower shortage of early World War II.

Greyhound bus depot was at Jefferson Street next to Mac's (Judge McInnis' father) and the Rexall Drug store. Diagonally across was the volunteer fire station where the first to arrive would turn on the siren. During the war it was used for air raid warning.

Fairfield's Texas Street had three creek crossings. Texas and Clay was good for minnows, tadpoles and foot-long horse hair worms. East side of Jefferson was next to the city park. A block north of Texas Street on Pennsylvania Street

near DR's plant, was a good swimming hole during warm spring days.

Texas Street is on the first transcontinental highway for automobiles, Lincoln Highway (S.F. to N.Y.). Long radius sweeping curves were for "high speed" travel by Model T (compared to horses). These curves can be seen at the intersection with North Texas Street, Rockville, Midway Road and first Dixon and section line corners on the way to Davis.

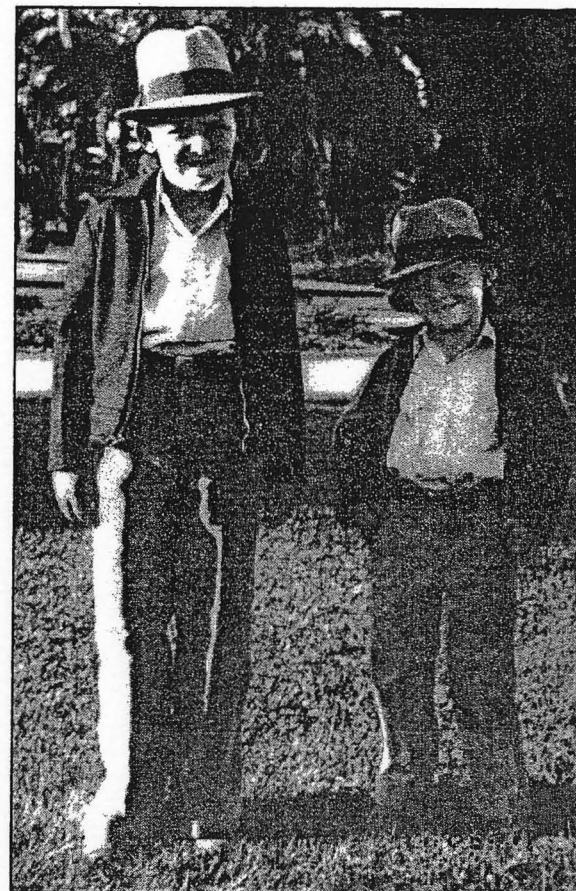
A shock wave equal to an A-bomb at 20 miles hit Texas Street during the war when Port Chicago's two ammo ships blew up. All glass storefronts on the north side of Texas Street were shattered.

Before Shasta Dam and other Sierra dams were built, a wet year and high tide would put flood water on the old courthouse curb at Union Street.

Howard Yatsy was the one-man police department looking out for the whole town. Assemblyman Crowley, who was sightless, represented us in Sacramento.

Early in World War II, Texas Street and Webster were blocked off for a war bond rally with Bing Crosby and Bob Hope."

— Bert Maxwell
Fairfield



Courtesy photo/BERT MAXWELL

Bert and Jerry Maxwell in front of the old Armijo High School in 1935. (Note palm tree in the background is now 100 feet tall.)

Solano Heritage *portrait of farm family*

By Susan Allen

Special to the Daily Republic

*W*hen reflecting on the historic homes in Fairfield and Suisun City, estates just outside these communities are often overlooked. Yet the farming families have played a major role in the development of this area.

The headline of a 1914 Solano Republican story attests to this: "Thriving agricultural cities of Fairfield and Suisun on 1,000 acres of once thought useless land."

Many decedents from the original homesteads still work this land. Guy Stuart of Birds Landing, 14 miles from Fairfield, farms what was once his grandfathers' wheatfields.

He explained that during the late 1800s and early 1900s the area from Birds Landing to Suisun City was dotted with homes. Wherever there is a stand of eucalyptus trees there was once a home. Mechanized farm equipment replaced the laborers that worked for the large ranches, leaving the area now sparsely populated with ranch owners.

One such ranch was founded by Stuart's grandfather, Frank Taylor. Known as the Taylor House, just outside of Birds Landing, the estate has gracefully withstood the test of time.

In 1864, Frank Taylor, then 18 years old, set out across the plains driving a transport wagon for an emigrant wagon train. He arrived in Sacramento June 19 and immediately started looking for a place to settle.

Frank Taylor found the Delta region sparsely populated and many told him the land held little promise, yet he felt sure there was money to be made in wheat. After several years of working on a ranch in the area he began acquiring land bit by bit.

His first home in Birds Landing later was used for the bunk house. It still stands today.

He successfully sold his wheat to a buyer in Suisun City and by 1887 decided to build a house worthy of his three little girls, Emma, Addie and Annie, the apples of his eye. With careful calculations and keen architectural understanding, he built a home that to this day stands structurally sound.

The home was built of redwood shipped from the Bay area and situated perfectly on the lot so that the home is wonderfully cool in the unusually hot summers of this dry area. Suisun City's breeze gently flows through the house touching each room with its welcome relief. Taylor's \$4,500 and a year of work made the home a showplace for the area.

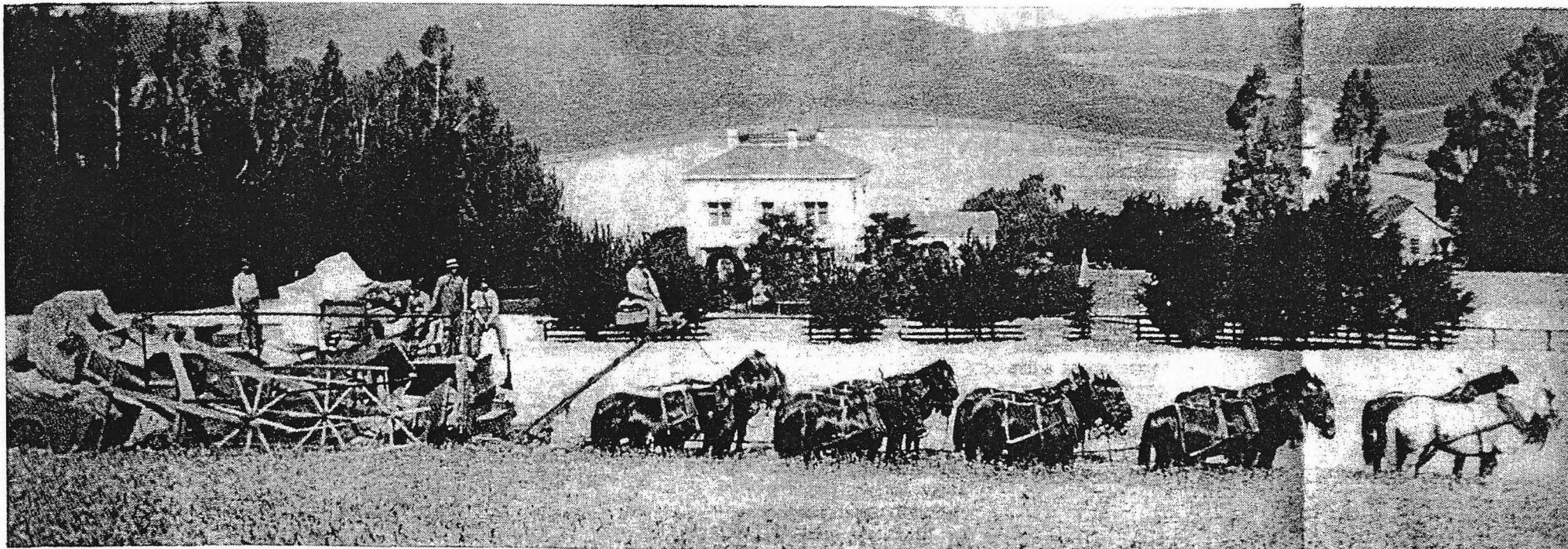
See Taylors, Page 42W



DR Photo by Dudley Owens

The top, left, photo shows wheat farming in front of the Taylor house in Birds Landing. In the photo at left, Emma Taylor poses with her mode of transportation. Theron and Carley Robinson, pictured above, stand at the gate to their home, a memorial to the Taylor family. The photo to the right shows the Taylor House at the turn of the century. Addie Taylor, one of Frank's three daughters, models a Victorian dress in photo on the Solano Heritage cover.





Courtesy Photos

Taylors

From Page 41W

Aside from the lavish gardens planted with what in that era were considered exotic palms and evergreens, the grounds also included an immense barn to stable his work and pleasure horses of which he was extremely proud, 400 head of sheep and land holdings that grew to 2,424 acres.

Taylor provided his Victorian daughters with a life of leisure, excellent schooling and beautiful furnishings. He was remembered to have said that he owed most of his success to the cheerful cooperation and wise council of his late wife, the former Miss Mary Weavers.

At the turn of the century, this prosperous family enjoyed a gracious yet unpretentious lifestyle.

They procured a Chinese cook whose tiny quarters still stand behind the house. Several pieces of Oriental furnishings and a rose bush the cook brought from his home country remain a tribute to the man who spent most of his life preparing meals for the Taylors.

The women took much pride in their clothing; a seamstress lived with them each summer to sew the latest fashions for them. Emma's dress form still stands in her room fitted with one of her summer dresses.

The girls of the area attended a finishing school in Rio Vista to learn the social graces of a lady. Sewing, fancy stitching, drawing and piano playing were among the highly valued virtues.

Although the family didn't entertain on a large scale, small dinners, community picnics and frequent trips to San Francisco were wel-

come affairs. At a pace of 4 miles an hour by buggy, their 14 mile trips to Fairfield became an all day excursion.

Most of their shopping was done locally at Birds Landing in the store that is still operating today. When the girls went calling, a hired hand would hitch the family Shetland pony to the children's surrey and off they would go in style.

The Taylor girls were required to do minimal duties for an allowance. Washing and starching the delicate lace curtains, then stretching them on a wooden form to dry probably wasn't a favorite task. The women also gathered eggs from their hen house to sell for 15 cents a dozen.

The well-groomed yard required hours of work and although the Taylors employed a yard man, the woman often would work in the rose gardens, being extremely careful not to snag their lovely day dresses.

Several of the rose bushes still grow there.

Some things we now take for granted posed daily problems for people such as the Taylors. Because there was no refrigeration or ice man, meat was stored in the cellar in meat safes, large box-like structures covered with wire.

Mosquitos must have been a continual summer problem so beds were often covered with dreamy mosquito netting.

During winter months, to keep the house warmer and to cut down on coal use, the living room was closed off and only the dining room and parlor were used.

Although the house was luxuriously fitted with a "modern" tin bathtub upstairs, an envied convenience, for many years the toilet was a privy out back. The outhouse, still standing, was fitted with four

holes, two big ones for adults and two little ones for children.

The house has been a labor of love for Mr. and Mrs. Theron Robinson who now reside there, and has been kept almost like a museum of the Taylor family. Carley Robinson, related by marriage to the Taylors, knew the sisters in their later years, and from them she obtained a wealth of knowledge of life in early Solano County.

Life in Victorian times often seems mundane and boring to people living today. The simple pleasures that have now given way to our fast-paced society were once eagerly anticipated and thoroughly enjoyed. Never again will relaxing mean summer evenings on the porch in wicker chairs, songs sung around the piano or the excitement of a good horse race down main street.

Taylor's house aging gracefully

By Susan Allen

Special to the Daily Republic

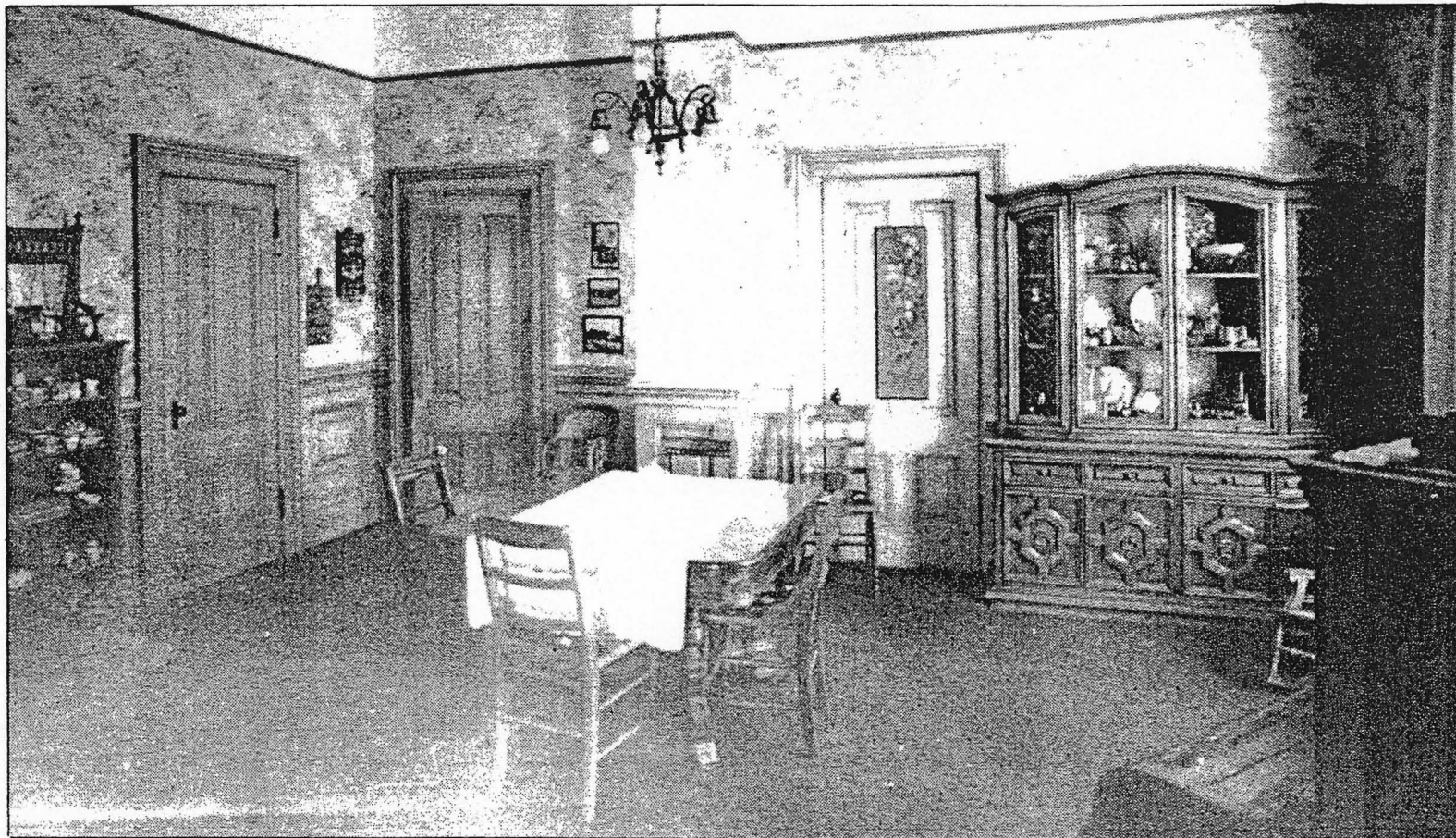
When Frank Taylor built his lavish home in Birds Landing in 1887, he probably never imagined that it would still be standing, almost 100 years later.

The fact that it exists today, more beautiful than ever, is because of the untiring efforts of Theron and Carley Robinson who now reside there.

The home and gardens have been faithfully maintained and improved upon without losing historical significance. The lawn is bordered by beds of old fashioned flowers that bloom all summer. The quaint old iron gate invites visitors to enter a home where time seems frozen around the turn of the century.

Upon entering the home it is a pleasant surprise to see that the interior is a sharp contrast to the cluttered, gloomy, claustrophobic rooms usually associated with Victorian dwellings. One of the great virtues of this house is that it has a marvelous light airy feeling and is immensely cheerful. Large windows swagged in yards of soft green, and a 12-foot ceiling allow the sun to bathe each room.

The parlor or sitting room is graced by a lovely empire, styled white marble fireplace offering



DR Photo by Dudley Owens

The dining room of the Taylor House still wears the same furnishings, mouldings and wallpaper it did almost 100 years ago.

warm comfort to visitors in cold months. The redwood moldings within the house have been antiqued a creamy yellow that when paired with the pale green wallpapers used throughout, give each room an air of elegance.

Other features of the home are the open floor plan and spacious rooms. The living and dining areas flow together creating a sumptuous formal room for entertaining.

The original dining table is still

used and to judge the size of the dining room, both a large china cabinet and a piano (once belonging to one of Taylor girls) sit comfortably in this room.

Formerly a poorly arranged space, the kitchen has undergone a complete renovation by the Robinsons. It is now a light, functional area that still retains the old-world appeal of the rest of the house.

Well designed work space, com-

plete with an eat-in area and new cabinets have been major improvements. The old brick fireplace and round oak table with caned chairs, plus Carley's delightful collection of old kitchen utensils are charming touches. The kitchen door leads to a covered porch, now Carley's potting room.

Each of the three upstairs bedrooms have been left almost as they were when the three Taylor

girls inhabited them. The original floral carpeting, old sewing machines, even an antique typewriter with an unfinished letter, remain, as if waiting for the girls to return.

Each bedroom affords a different view of the estate. The front bedroom has a white marble fireplace and with the wonderful old bed, the room is a poetic, serene retreat.

Farm life

Roy and Betty Mason recall their ancestors' early Green Valley days

By Patty Muntzel

Daily Republic Staff Writer

GREEN VALLEY — Roy and Betty Mason have a home perched above Green Valley and below it are about 15,600 acres of their cattle-grazing land, plus 30 acres of pears, and in Suisun Valley, 40 acres of grapes.

Their grandfathers were pioneers in the valley and both Roy and Betty weave stories of horse-drawn wagons, peaches for 4 cents a box, and woodcutters who lived in cabins in the woods.

Roy is in his early 60s and his grandfather was George Washington Mason, who established the family name in Green Valley in the 1850s. Later, the name of the road leading up the Mason home ranch was changed from "Rural Route" to "Mason Road."

The grandfather was originally from Virginia. He was named after a president and turned out to be "a very patriotic man," Betty said.

"A perfect gentleman who wore a silk hat," added Roy. "He had a very fine horse and buggy, and there were very few days he wasn't drunk." Roy smiled. It was unclear whether he was resurrecting the truth or simply juicy rumors.

He married Sarah Ellis and the two became farmers, growing

pears, plums, apricots, prunes and cattle. They had 166 acres.

The fruit industry began in Solano County in the early 1800s. By 1915 there were four distinct fruit growing areas: Vaca Valley and Pleasants Valley, known for their early plums, peaches and apricots; Suisun Valley, noted for its Bartlett pears and cherries and Green Valley, noted for its early cherries and wine grapes. Northern Solano County in general became one of the nut, apricot and peach centers of the state.

"Sarah Ellis came across the plains in a covered wagon," Betty said. Sarah was from the Midwest, it appeared.

Roy and Betty have to reconstruct the past from memory — all the family records were burned in a fire that destroyed the family home in the early 1900s. The home burnt down again in 1936.

One of the buildings left standing was an old stone cellar built in the 1860s that is now used for an office. The Mason family once owned a dairy and the cellar was used to keep the milk, cheese and butter cold before the days of modern refrigeration.

Now Roy and Betty's daughter, Sarah, and son-in-law, Frank Lindemann, live at the site of the

original home ranch. They have two children, Curtis, 9, and Jennifer, 7, both of whom care for their own cattle and horses. Curtis is a 4-H member, and Jennifer, when she is old enough, will become one also.

They'll both continue to be farmers when they grow up, Sarah said proudly.

Roy's father, Charles Mason, was born in 1869 in Green Valley and purchased a 1,000 acre parcel of land for \$17 an acre in 1915. Roy inherited that land.

Grain covered Solano County fields before the orchards and vineyards came in to replace it. Chaparral forested the hills.

Fresh water streams such as Putah, Sweeny, Ulatis, Alamo, Pleasants Valley, Suisun and Green Valley creeks brought moisture and fertility to the land.

Betty's great grandfather, Klaus Siebe, was the first to settle in the area. He came to Cordelia. But the first to farm there was Nicolas Garbin, his son. He would plow his fields using a team of horses, Betty said.

Roy recalls that cars were so rare a sight on Rockville Road that when one appeared, his father and uncle, George Lee Mason, would rush out to see who it was.

"There was no (Green Valley) Country Club, no nothing," Roy

said. "Maybe half a dozen houses."

Roy remembers the Depression days on the farm — "You bet I do." Times were hard, but people were happy, he said.

He was only a boy, but he recalled, "People came in and asked for a job. Didn't ask how much. Wages were 25 cents an hour. . . . They lived in tents in the orchard."

Peaches were 4 cents a box (about 45 pounds); pears were 5 cents a box and apricots were 8 cents a box, Betty recalled. She was a town girl, but she cut fruit in the summer.

She and Roy were high school sweethearts — they met at Armijo High School.

Roy remembers shooting ducks in swampland in what is now vineyards off of Green Valley Road. "It was all swamp area," he said, until settlers tilled the ground and drained it.

In 1852, two years after the birth of Solano County, 6,000 acres were under cultivation; now 373,625 of Solano County's approximately 585,000 acres are devoted to agriculture.

In 1855, it had increased to 18,500 acres. At 7,500 acres, wheat was the top crop, followed by barley at 5,200 acres, oats at 700 acres, hay at 4,000 acres, corn at 700 acres, potatoes at 200 acres, onion at 30 acres and

other crops, 160 acres.

Now the top crop is tomatoes, at 15,897 acres. The crops that bring in the most money are tomatoes, followed by sugar beets, field corn and wheat.

Green Valley was a big cherry market in the early 1900s but buckskin disease wiped out the trees around the 1930s and farmers replanted other orchards — peaches, walnuts and vineyards.

Farmers built their own dams off creeks to irrigate their land, but when the government built the Monticello Dam, and routed water to the area via the Putah South Canal, the creeks and natural springs were no longer needed. The Masons stocked a lake on their property with fish, since they don't use the water.

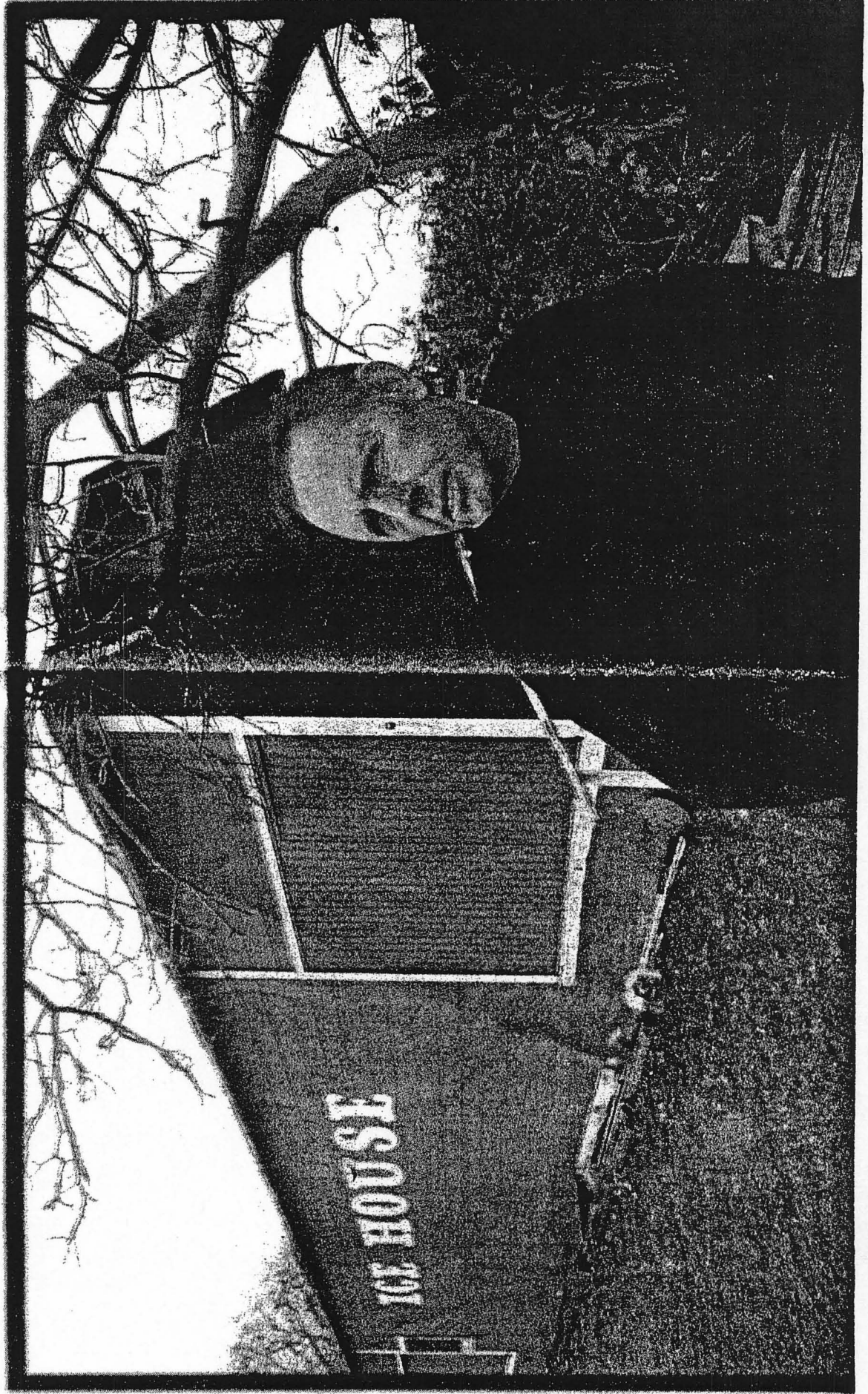
In fact, the problem farmers have now is one of a high water table, whereas, before the Monticello Dam project, the problem was of too little water.

The worst drought the Masons recall was that in the mid-1970s.

They have had their ups and downs in farming, they recall. These times are lean, economically for farmers, they agreed. But they plan to weather it out.

"That's what being a farmer means, because you are dependent on so many factors," Betty said.

History on ice



A tale of magic lights and chasing after the ice block delivery man in Fairfield

By Art Isberg
SPECIAL TO THE DAILY REPUBLIC

FAIRFIELD — Few who take cold milk out of the refrigerator today can imagine the wonder brought by the six-foot electric machine that infiltrated kitchens 50 years ago.

The cold air inside, the magical light that went on and off every time the door opened and closed, the steady hum, were a great sources of amazement and excited conversation, and even the impetus for friends to gather.

It also brought about the demise of another wonder of childhood — following the ice man through the streets of Fairfield and Suisun City as he delivered huge blocks of ice.

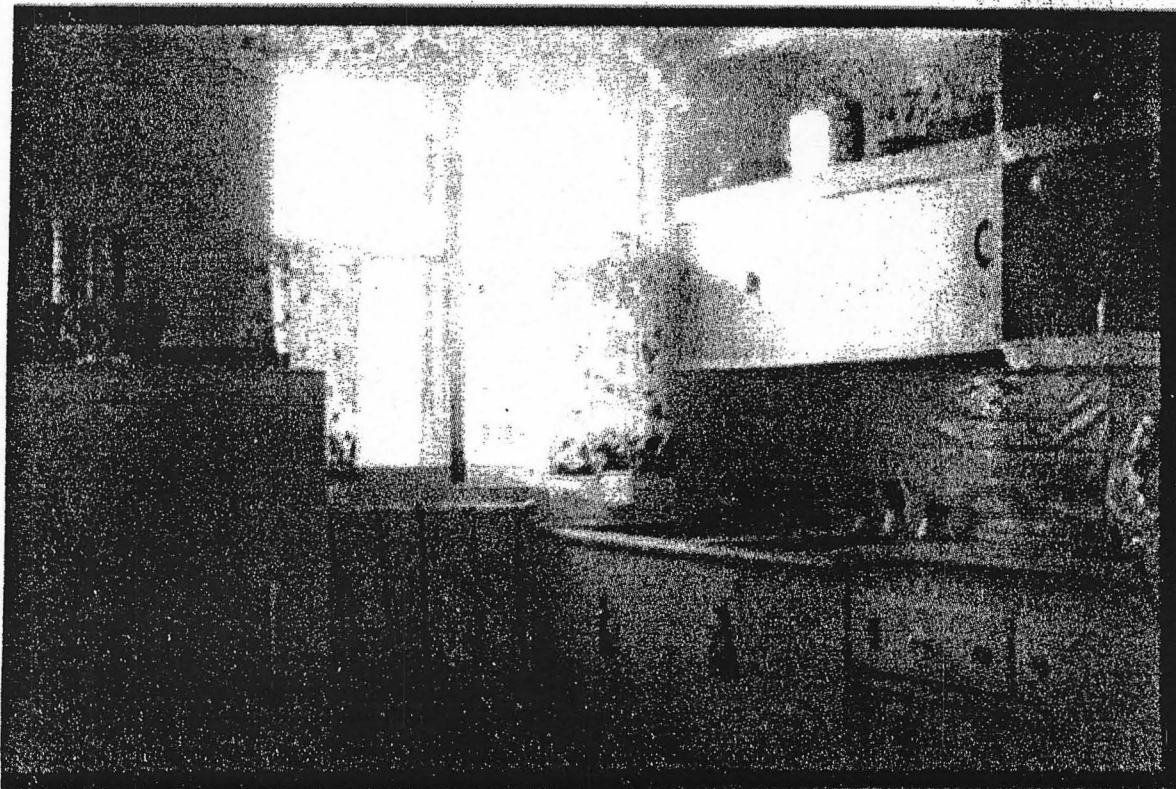
Back in 1943, we and almost everyone else I knew owned an ice box, one small step up from even harsher times when people tried to preserve perishable food by storing them on winter window ledges or in root cellars, or hanging meat on screened, shaded

50 years ago

often simply painted, plain steel.

Inside, it was lined in sheet metal then fixed with a series of shelves, the last of which was a heavy wooden slat rack at the top on which a gleaming 25 pound block of ice was stored. Underneath this was a drip pan that had to be emptied regularly, for inevitably it would all melt down to nothing more than water.

You constantly fought opening the ice



An ice box was a focal point in kitchens 50 years ago.

ed back porches.

The squat, little device was much more compact than the tall, cavernous, two-door electric jobs with ice water or ice cubes on demand. Ours was about 4½ feet tall, the metal outside skin sometimes enameled but

box door and then only tugged it open for a second to get what you wanted, then slammed it closed. In summer when temperatures around little Fairfield often soared above 100 degrees, this battle became even more critical.

Even worse, if you wanted to have ice in your drink, someone had to take out an ice pick and chip off a few precious pieces of the block, which depleted the ice block even more. You measured your desire for ice chips against the time until the ice man's next visit.

Here in town, the Huck brothers owned the big, canvas-covered delivery truck and the ice house just across the railroad tracks in Suisun City, next to where Virgil's Bait Shop sits today.

If you missed the ice man, you had to drive to Suisun City and buy a 25 pound block by inserting 35 cents in the big storefront machine, then pushing in the handle. In a few moments there would be a thump, then a rumbling clattering roar as the huge block came thundering down the rails to stop in a shower of ice chips.

The deliver system was basic and steady. A broad-shouldered young man drove the ice truck slowly down each street looking for an ice sign propped up in the front window. Then he stopped, got out and climbed up in back, parting the canvas flaps to uncover walls of blue-white ice tall as a man's head.

He kept a long, wicked ice pick in a leather sheath on his belt, and with it worked quickly and accurately thrusting the point deftly along some invisible line which cracked clean through, freeing a single, large block. He hefted it up onto his shoulder, which was protected by a thick rubber cape, and stepped down off the back of the truck heading for the house.

During summer vacation when I was home, I always ran ahead to open the front door and usher him into the kitchen. He took out the pathetic little piece of ice that was left in the ice box, then slid in the big, shiny new block. Then he whipped out his ice pick once again and cut the old chunk so it would just fit in what space was left around the edges, a real work of art.

Home delivery cost 50 cents, which was left in a little dish on top of the ice box. If

you weren't home, you put up your sign and left the key under the door mat or in the mailbox. The change still went into the bowl. Simplicity and honesty were the key-stone of this arrangement and most valuable service. This is something this country could use a good dose of today.

One of the biggest thrills associated with the weekly appearance of the ice man was the chance to chase the truck down the street on our bicycles, then try to reach onto the steel railed bed in back and snag a big sliver of wet ice to suck on.

While this was considered great sport to a gang of 8-year-olds, it didn't set too well with the truck driver, who often slammed on the brakes, jumped out and told us not to get near the moving vehicle. Generally, we stood off in silence. Then, when he got back in and shifted into gear again, we pedaled like crazy to sneak up on him again, but at an angle, out of sight of his rear view mirror.

But this bucolic fun soon lost out to advancing technology. I will always remember the day when our next door neighbors, the Busby family, got a real electric refrigerator.

They invited us and their other neighbors over and they demonstrated the marvels of this tall, white, wonderful piece of machinery. The shiny chrome shelves inside were wide and deep and the upper fold-down door revealed a compartment with real ice cubes made in little partitioned aluminum trays.

It was nothing short of astounding. You didn't even need an ice pick.

And every time the door opened and closed, a little bright light went on and off inside the refrigerator faster than you could catch it. If the Busbys had bought a big, red Cadillac, they couldn't have been more proud.

As for the rest of the neighborhood, we all struggled along for several more years with our dumpy and unimaginative ice boxes, and our little white ice signs in the window, while saving up our nickels and dimes in hopes of one day owning our very own electric refrigerator.

I guess you could call those halcyon days pretty basic by today's standards. But they were good days, with honest values, down home people and a kind of human decency that is all too rare in the middle 1990s.

It seems to me that the simplest things made the greatest impressions on us, and I never forgot the wonder of that light in the refrigerator going on and off. . . I think I'll go downstairs right now and watch mine do the very same thing.

Old Archive Story

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Body:

we have photos of:

bw mug of wright from 1936 yearbook

bw of wright with tennis team in 1936

color xerox of armijo from 1959 yearbook cover, bw photo of armijo from amy

1904 bw pic of armijo at old location

Editor's note: ``Remember When" is an occasional series of stories submitted by readers about Solano County of yesteryear.

By Walter Wright

SPECIAL TO THE DAILY REPUBLIC

FAIRFIELD - I thought, perhaps, some of our new residents in the Fairfield area might like to know some of the story regarding the first high school in the area, Armijo. I will go back in time as best I can but I will go more into detail during my years at Armijo, 1933-36, plus how members of my family continued to attend Armijo after I graduated in 1936.

My mother, Pearl Lambert~ Wright, graduated from Armijo in 1909, 90 years ago. She was the captain of the girls' basketball team. Some of her classmates were Walter Parker, who became Solano County's tax assessor; ~Mabel Eager, who became the home adviser for Solano County; and Madge (Swim) Jackson, who became a school teacher. Pearl Lambert Wright became a housewife and a terrific mother.

My oldest sister, Viola Wright Eisenzoff, graduated from Armijo in 1929, which was the same year my sister, Marvel Wright Little, started Armijo. Shortly after Marvel started attending Armijo, it burnt down. Armijo burnt down in December 1929 during Christmas vacation. Within Armijo was our county library. A new one~ was built across Union Avenue from Armijo. It was very well guarded by the statue of Chief Solano, who kept his eyes on our library and was prepared at a moment's notice to go into action with his bow and arrow~s.

During the time Armijo was being rebuilt, which was at the same location, the students attended classes in various buildings in Fairfield. One building was the Fairfield fire house and another was Armijo's gym, which was a building by itself.

Marvel graduated in 1933 and my youngest~ sister, Ruth Wright Kilkenny, graduated in 1935. Her class had 35 students but my class of 1936 had 58 students, which was the largest class to graduate from Armijo up to that time. In my graduation class was Jane Chadbourne, Jack Chadbourne, Harry Chadbourne, George Tomasini, Margaret Mason and me. We were all cousins. Our grandparents were the early pioneers in Suisun Valley and Green Valley.

Before entering Armijo, I had been attending a one-teacher, one-room school, Dover, and I had a rough time the first few weeks finding my different classrooms in this large, two-story school. I wasn't the only one during those first days who was lost.

Mr. Brownlee was the principal of Armijo when I went there between 1933 and 1936. He was there many years before and after my time at Armijo. He was a ~big man. I understand he played football for some university in the East. I know when he walked down the halls, we gave him all the room he wanted. His nickname was ``The Bull." (That was behind his back and not to his face.) I had Mr. Brownlee as my civics teacher when I was a senior and I found him to

be a very kind and considerate person. But he silently demanded respect from his students, which he got.

Mr. James Barkeley was our history teacher. I took medieval history and U.S. history from him. Medieval history was during my freshman year and I couldn't understand how I got a passing grade because I had no idea what he was talking about. I got good marks in U.S. history when I took the subject in my senior year because I knew what he was talking about. Mr. Barkeley, in my opinion, was not meant to teach at the high school level. When you sat down in your seats, he would lean against the wall and start talking, giving you names, dates, places, etc. and didn't seem to care if you listened or not and very seldom got the class involved. ~He was a brilliant man with a powerful delivery and he would ~have been a fantastic university professor.

During my senior year, I made the tennis team and Mr. Barkeley was our coach. He wasn't a young man ~but he played a terrific game of tennis. He developed some good tennis players. One such person was Anne Gurnett. I think there were times when our main coach, Mr. Bailey, might have considered her to play on the boys' basketball team. She was an outstanding athlete and an honor student. All the students at Armijo loved to watch her play basketball.

Mr. Bailey taught auto mechanics and was our coach. He was well qualified on the fundamentals of football, basketball, baseball and track. ~~~~He would not settle for second place. It was first or nothing. During his time at Armijo, he won many championships and after each one, a championship banner hung in our gym. During my senior year, I went out for baseball but I got there too late to get a uniform. So Mr. Bailey suggested I practice with the team and if someone turned their uniform in, then~~ I would be the first to get it. My cousin, Jack Chadbourne, and I were shagging ``fly-balls" and he misjudged one and it hit him on the head. He said, ``You can have my uniform."

I couldn't believe he was hit on the head because Jack, better known as ``Jack Rabbit," was our quarterback. I played center and he called all the plays, was the captain of our basketball team, ~was a terrific track man, etc. Matter of fact, when he was in the Davis relays in 1936, he not only won pole vaulting, high jumping, 100-yard dash, 220-yard dash, broad jump, etc., but his records were not broken until years later. I think he still holds one or two yet. Jack was only about 5 foot, 6 inches tall, but trying to catch him would be like trying to catch a chicken with four legs. When we played football and got close to the goal line, we would tell Jack to throw a pass to Lewis Morrill~ because if he made a touchdown, his dad would give him five bucks. Later on in life, Lewis Morrill became a Hollywood doctor and married Rhonda Fleming. I did see his picture in a Hollywood magazine examining Mario ~Alonza's throat. ~Alonza, at that time, was considered to be one of the outstanding singers in the world.

Mr. Newell taught woodsho~~p, mechanical drawing and band. The band would play at our basketball games, graduation exercises, etc. In my opinion, no two were playing the same tune. It goes without saying there weren't any Pete Fountains in the group. I took woodshop from Mr. Newell. ~In my opinion, he had the patience of Job. He was a very quiet and polite person.

Mr. Spohn taught science, biology and physics. I took science from him when I was a freshman and biology when I was a sophomore. I don't think it was a secret that he grad~ed you based on how much he liked you. I always got good grades, which wasn't based on my work but I think it was due to my sister, Marvel, when she arranged a fishing date, with my dad. They were both avid fishermen. They became fishing buddies. The first time they went fishing, my Dad said, ``Mr. Spohn is crazy as hell." ~He went on to say after he threw his line in the water, he would put his pole in a holder, then tie a little bell on the end of his pole and when a fish would bite, it would ring the bell. At that time, all fisherman held their fish poles in their hands. Today, they sell that little bell in bait shops to do what Mr. Spohn had been doing all along. So I guess he wasn't as crazy as my Dad thought he was.

My algebra teacher was Miss Millsap. She was also the girls' basketball coach. She only taught one year because Mr. Brownlee refused to hire her again because she got married and her husband had a job. This was during the Depression and he hired only single women ~as teachers. I don't believe he would have gotten away with this by today's standards.

Mr. Sherman was the advanced business teacher. I never took any subjects from him but I understand he wanted only excellence and would not settle for less.

Mr. Stone taught the beginning business courses. When I was a senior, I took typing from him as well as bookkeeping. I found him to be a very quiet, polite but effective teacher.

Miss Bozart taught home economics. Very few boys took the course but I understand, according to the girls, she was a terrific teacher. I always wondered about that because if she was such a good cook, why wasn't she married?

Miss Davis was the English teacher for all freshman. She was plain looking, wore plain clothes, walked with a limp but had a contagious smile. She was my favorite teacher, not what she did for me but what she did for so many of her students. She took the timid, the bashful, the ``least most likely not to succeed" and convinced them that they were somebody and many of them believed her and did succeed. At our 20th~ class reunion in 1956, she was there with that

famous smile all over her face. For some reason or another, she was wearing lipstick, rouge, etc. and looked younger than she looked in 1936. In my opinion, Miss Davis was loved by everyone. Her students were her life.

Miss ~Reese was the advanced English teacher. As a rule, all sophomores enrolled in her class. Miss Reese had a terrific personality and was also liked by everyone. In her class, we read "A Midsummer Night's Dream." ~ To me it was a "Midsummer Night's ~Nightmare." I had no idea ~what in the hell was going on but most of the girls would say, "Isn't this beautiful" or ~~~~~ something like that. I almost asked them this question: "Are you reading the same book that I am?"

We played football in the afternoon on a dirt field, no face masks, etc., and even though the adults were big followers, very few showed up because they were working. But we had two who always showed up, and with their loud voices, that is all we needed. One was Joe Serpas, who owned "The O-K Sweetshop" and the other was Bush Oliver, a rancher. But when we played basketball the whole town turned out. The band played only between ~games - thank God. ~Our big game was when the Armijo Indians played against the Vacaville Bulldogs. Both towns followed this game, whether it was played in Vacaville or at Armijo.

We had three school dances a year: the Freshman Reception, the Sophomore Hop and the Junior Prom. All of our dances started the same way. Mr. Brownlee and his partner would lead the grand march as the rest of us brought up the confused rear. After this ordeal, then the dance would begin. The only band we had was Lou Boss. He had a four-piece band, no singer, no electronic system but the music was heard at both ends of our gym. Mr. Spohn always took care of the door. You would show him your student body card, then walk in. Once you were inside, you were never allowed to go outside and return. It was very well run and everybody seemed to enjoy themselves.

Perhaps my greatest memory when I attended Armijo was that of Molly McFall and Margaret Hale. Molly was beautiful and full of life and Margaret was also beautiful but very much a lady. They were both terrific young women. Every day at noon they would be in the hall behind a table selling candy bars for their classes' entertainment. They would sell candy at all football games, basketball games, etc. I understand they remained the best of friends for many years.

Miss Reese, Mr. Sherman and Mr. Barkeley would go to "The O-K Sweetshop" for lunch and on the way there acted like teenagers. All they did was laugh. It wasn't until years later I found out why they laughed so much. It was because they were telling dirty jokes.

Our family continued on going to Armijo and many of our kids, grandkids, etc. also graduated from Armijo. For the first two generations, as far as I know, no one went on to receive any degrees. But the next two generations all went to universities to get their degrees.

When I went to Armijo, all students were concerned about each other and it was more like "family." I, for one, can say that I am grateful that I was able to graduate from Armijo High School.

Fairfield resident Walter Wright is a 1936 graduate of Armijo High School, a retired Southern Pacific worker and a scientist. He is now 80 years old.

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COURTESY PHOTO

Lois Horgan, surrounded by Armijo boys who frequented the soda shop, worked for her parents during the store's run. Her specialty was extra-thick milk shakes. Pictured with her is Alvin Athey, top, along with Willie Valladello, Evo Canollo, Frank Muno and Herman Campos.

Horgan's soda fountain was located in the old Solano Theater building on Texas Street. Even though the shop was open only three years, 1938-1940, people still talk about it today.

John Horgan, 14, the author's uncle, poses in front of the shop. His parents owned the soda fountain.

These six Armijo lads frequented the soda fountain. Third from the left is Manual Campos, who later became mayor.

Remember when

Armijo High to Horgan's fountain was a short walk

by Susan Luckenbach

While passing by the old Solano Theater in downtown Fairfield recently, I began to reflect on some of the history behind the words on the marquee, "Thanks for the Memories, 52 years."

My first memories of the theater began in the mid-'50s, when rock 'n' roll was in its infancy. Saturday matinees were the scene of baby-boomer youths cheering the good guys on the screen and booing the bad.

During intermissions (in those days, we had two movies and a cartoon), aspiring Mouseketeers took to the stage and would ply their craft, all the while dodging spitballs and ice cubes . . . it was a simpler time.

My family members related their own stories of the old theater and the building in which it was housed. In January of 1938, my grandparents, Dennis and Laura Horgan, moved from their waterfront home in Vallejo along with their children, Lois, my father Robert, "Bud" to family and friends, and John.

They purchased a home on Empire Street which was razed a few years ago to be part of the Daily Republic and they purchased a soda fountain, located within the old theater building. It was known as Horgan's and they proudly sold Golden State ice cream.

Grandpa Horgan or "Dinny" as he was known, had been a delivery man for Golden State and when this opportunity arose, he took it.

Fairfield in those years was a far different town than the one we now know. Texas Street was also Highway 40 and all of the traffic traversing upvalley to Sacramento and beyond drove on the highway that snaked through all of the small communities along its route.

Fairfield of that time had a Mayberryesque quality about it. There was one policeman who worked 9-to-5, local grocery and hardware stores and families that had a long, colorful history.

Horgan's fountain played an integral part in the social scene for the teenagers of the day, many of them a who's-who of Fairfield history. With the theater next door and television still a few years away, the fountain became a hub of social activity.

Allan Witt's barbershop was next door and it wasn't unusual for his patrons to stop by the fountain for some ice cream while waiting for their haircut.

There were subtle differences in that fountain of the '30s and '40s and the '50s' diners we all know. Similarly, many high school students made it their hangout. Hamburgers and colas were served as well as all the great ice cream treats.

My aunt, Lois Horgan-Canova, worked for her parents during the store's run. Her specialty was extra-thick milk shakes. And what soda fountain would be complete without the jukebox playing all the latest hits from Glenn Miller and Artie Shaw?

Noticeable differences included the lack of French fries. In the '30s and '40s, this food was reserved for only the finest restaurants. Potato chips were the choice of the time.

There were also fewer cars owned by the patrons. The walk from Armijo High School was short so that presented a minor obstacle. Still, there were some cool guys who impressed the girls with their cars.

Many plans were made at the fountain for dates and sporting events and of course, some tomfoolery, but overall, these were a fine bunch of kids. In a year or two, virtually all the young men would be in uniform becoming heroes in Europe and the Pacific.

They returned to make Fairfield the great city that it is. And despite only being open three years, those who were a part of Horgan's Fountain, talk about it to this day.

Susan Horgan Luckenbach, 54, was born and raised in Fairfield. Now retired, she is the former owner of New-Lan Landscapes commercial construction company in Fairfield. Contributing to this article is her cousin, John Canova Jr., 51, the son of Lois Horgan-Canova. Canova is a native of Fairfield who graduated from Armijo High School in 1967. He works as a consultant for Canova Moving & Storage in Fairfield.

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Pearl Harbor survivor says public's fading recognition of Dec. 7, 1941, is natural

At 81, Gil Swift is an engaging man with a direct, friendly style. He knows that not many people remember Pearl Harbor on Dec. 7 anymore. And he's not particularly bothered by that.

If you don't know why this is an opinion worth hearing, you need to know a few more things about Swift - and Pearl Harbor, if your history is rusty.

Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, is where Japan attacked the United States and pulled America into World War II 56 years ago this morning. It was a Sunday then, too. Without warning, Japan's planes bombed and strafed the U.S. Pacific fleet, killing 2,400 Americans, sinking or crippling 19 ships, and destroying 188 planes. U.S. defenses barely had time to react.

The loss stunned the country. People stopped what they were doing as radio bulletins spread the news.

For Swift, who later spent a dozen years running the Fairfield-Suisun Chamber of Commerce, the shock was infinitely larger. He was on board the USS West Virginia at Ford Island in Pearl Harbor when Japan's bombs started to fall.

Swift, then 25, was a radio operator. He was sitting near the ship's No. 1 gun turret on deck and writing to his future wife when the raid began. He scrambled into action with the rest of his crew while detonations rocked the harbor. During one explosion on his ship, he blacked out while reaching through a hole in the deck trying to save another crewman. He woke up in a hospital.

The West Virginia sank, with more than half of its crew of 1,000 killed

or wounded.

For years, Dec. 7 became a day of somber remembrance for America. The treachery of the attack, the soldiers who died fighting Japan and Germany during the next four years, the sacrifices required of most Americans during the war, all made Dec. 7 unique in U.S. history. The goal every year was not to forget.

Except as time passes, people are forgetting, just as previous generations in this forward-looking country forgot earlier sacrifices.

Swift, retired to a home on the Sacramento River, said he understands.

"Pearl Harbor will always stand out as a day in history, particularly because of the way it happened," he said Friday.

"But it's also true that the personal relationships to Pearl Harbor are going away. I belong to a couple of organizations, including the Pearl Harbor Survivors Association, and the list of deceased is getting larger every month in the bulletin.

"I think (the drop in attention) is a natural event. Maybe there are some people who resent that, that it's not getting enough attention. But it's one of the facts of life."

When a newspaper doesn't mention Pearl Harbor on Dec. 7, at least a few readers will complain. Often they're military veterans or other persons who lived through the war and don't want its hard-won lessons neglected.

Asked Swift what he thought the proper perspective of Pearl Harbor should be in 1997.

He paused. "I don't know if I'm in a position to help you out," he said. "My personal activity has declined. There will be some kind of celebration here (in Sacramento) Sunday, I suppose, but I have no plans to participate."

Americans born after the war - what should they think about Pearl Harbor today? ``It's like any other historical event," Swift said. ``It should be given the recognition it's due. But people who didn't participate are going to be giving it lesser significance.

``It's becoming history.

``With time, these things change. I can understand it. I wouldn't want to see it disappear entirely. But look at the Vietnam situation. There has been a lot of rumbling about the lack of attention those veterans got when they came home from that war.

``There have been so many things that have happened since then that it's bound to downgrade the notoriety of the event. And it's going to continue."

Swift, who still visits some of the many friends he made in Fairfield while managing the chamber from 1974 to 1986, moved to his West Sacramento home six years ago.

He lives near a golf course. Though he's had to give up the game, he sounded robust on the phone. ``Physically, I think I'm in pretty good shape," he said. ``I'm still hanging on, bothering my wife, Joan. And she bothers me. She drags me out every day for a walk."

She's the same woman, by the way, Swift was writing to 56 years ago this morning. They got married on April 5, 1942.

Bill Buchanan is the managing editor of the Daily Republic.

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Body:

Murray Bass

Memorial Day shouldn't just mean a three-day weekend.

A son's call on Memorial Day touches the heart

I am writing this on Memorial Day. Tomorrow it will be just another memory.

My dear wife remarked that it seemed to her Memorial Day has become just another three-day weekend. Except for veterans and their families, that is probably true.

Second- and third-generation memories aren't very substantial because they are hearsay memories. Too bad! If it is just another three-day weekend, if it doesn't mean anything, maybe we shouldn't "celebrate" Memorial Day at all.

Fortunately, there are a few remnants of pride and caring. On the Saturday before Memorial Day I was privileged to be a small part of the Nut Tree Air Fair. The Air Fair reminds folks of the grand history of military aviation and the brave men who have been a part of it. It displays and demonstrates a number of old "Warbirds" and other aircraft. It has become a way for veterans to keep the excitement of flying alive. Each year the mix of aircraft is different.

It is a great experience for kids in at least three ways. First, the kids can see and touch the planes. Next, they can talk to the men who have flown them and are flying them still. Finally, they can imagine themselves flying the aircraft. The Air Fair is a close and personal experience.

I don't want to give the impression that all the kids could see were old aircraft. Some of the other displays were Medivac helicopters, modern private aircraft and aerobatic craft. Youngsters could be close to the aircraft they had seen performing on TV.

I know for a fact that the veteran pilots at Nut Tree welcome visitors and tours, especially children. If you have a group that would like to take a walking tour of aircraft history, call Duncan's Hanger (Duncan Miller) at 446-1824.

While at the Air Fair, I met a fellow sporting a picture of a P-38 on his cap. I grew up in Burbank during the time when the P-38 was being tested and built. It was natural for me to ask about his cap. He told me that his brother had been a P-38 pilot during World War II and had been killed while serving in the Pacific Theater of Operations.

He has been researching and writing a book about his brother, his brother's training and life in the military as a P-38 pilot. He had been able to accumulate a huge amount of material in a book about 4 inches thick.

A good friend, Warren Sheldon, is doing the same thing about a member of his family who was on Corregidor at the beginning of World War II and who had made the Bataan Death March. Warren has just returned from a research trip to the Philippines. He was able to uncover details he hadn't expected, intimate, personal facts.

Stories like these are a great resource of national history as reflected in the lives of the men who were a part of that history. These are the kinds of stories that should be remembered.

I hope someone will collect these histories and put them in a national library that will give meaning to the political stories. Perhaps we can learn lessons from these personal stories that we haven't been able to learn from official accounts.

While I was writing this article, the telephone rang. It was my son. He told me he was just calling to say "thank you" for helping make his life possible. He said he was calling to say "thank you" for my service to America. The call was

completely unexpected and touched my heart more than I can say. I only wish all veterans were as fortunate as I am.

Politicians have been saying they will never forget the contributions of America's veterans. Their actions tell us that they have already forgotten both our veterans and the lessons of history. Please join me in extending heartfelt thanks to all of the men and women who have served our great country. They deserve our heartfelt thanks. Make the call my son made to me. Make it to a friend or family member.

Murray Bass is a Certified Financial Planner, practitioner in Fairfield . He has his master's in industrial psychology from Southern Methodist University. Write to him in care of the Daily Republic, PO Box 47, Fairfield , Calif. 94533. He can also be reached at 429-2226.

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Fond memories of the way it used to be in Fairfield

When John Campos opened his grocery store on Texas Street many years ago, his friend Joe Serpas was astonished to see aspirin for sale on one of the shelves. Angrily he told Campos that he was supposed to be running a grocery store and had no right selling medicine; that was the business of Walter Hunter in his pharmacy down the street.

We talked last week about earlier days in Fairfield and of some descendants of pioneer families. Smith's family members, who were longtime residents, included parents Joe and Bess Serpas and grandparents Nellie and Matt Murphy and Maria and Manuel Serpas.

For some 50 years now, Smith has celebrated birthdays with a group of women whose family names will be familiar to many. They are Dolores Wolfskill Russel of Mankas Corners, whose parents were Nellie and Clarence Nitzel. Barbara Bidstrupp Baker is the daughter of Edith and Charles Bidstrupp and Mayvila Huck Wolfskill; both her grandfather and father were mayors of Fairfield. Arlene Engel Reynold's parents were Suisun Valley pioneers Carl and Anna Reynolds and May Browning Mangels is the daughter of Vern and Lillie Browning.

Smith has very pleasant memories of growing up in Fairfield. All the kids played together; they all went to Fairfield Grammar School on Delaware Street and later to Armijo High. For lunch everybody went to one of three favorite places, Joe Serpas' "OK Sweet Shop," "The Shack" or "Bluets."

J.E. Braumlee was superintendent from 1940 to 1960. He stressed academics and sports, was respected because he set down rules and backed them, but they were "scared to death" of him.

The Fairfield Post Office was on the first floor of the three story building at 740 Texas St. Helen Weir was postmaster, assisted by Elvie Hickey and Louise Clark. Hickey was Alan Witt's sister.

The big thrill for little kids was riding in the elevator and Smith's childhood dream was to live on top of the building in a penthouse so she could see everything that was going on in town. The top was useful for "watchmen" during World War II. They were men of the town concerned about air raids and people getting shot. Bess Serpas worried about her husband Joe all the time during his watch.

Other businesses on the street were Woodard Chevrolet, Don Wilson Ford and Frank Marianno's Service Station. Everybody knew everybody else in town. The kids could ask for the family mail at the post office and have it handed to them, or ask most any merchant to call their moms for a ride home. There were, of course, no school buses in those days and at one point Smith's mother would not let her ride her bicycle to school. There was "too much traffic on Texas Street." For entertainment everyone went to the movie theater (still there) and to all the ball games at Lee Bell park. Dale Bell donated the three blocks to establish the park.

Suisun had the Elks, Mason and Odd Fellows halls; the Lions Club was the premier organization for men and there was a waiting list for women who wished to join the Wednesday Club.

Twenty men in town bought the old firehouse at the corner of Texas and Jefferson and used it for a great big Christmas party for the kids each year. The volunteer firemen invited everybody!

The Serpas family belonged to the Catholic church in Suisun; tragically it burned two weeks before Smith's marriage. Many people will remember the "Holy Ghost Celebrations" in Fairfield. It was part of a European tradition honoring Queen Isabelle.

Smith still participates in the "Soups Lunch" at Rio Vista; it consists of bread and the broth from roasted beef. The "fiesta" included a parade, Mass. and an auction of cattle. Ben Marianna was auctioneer and doubtless Smith's uncle

Joe Cabral attended. He owned the ranch where the air base is now.

The Fairfield area was a good place to live; hopefully we can retain some of the best aspects of its history.

B Hancock is the wife of a former Daily Republic publisher.

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For the love of family history

Woman writes about great grandfather, a California pioneer

By Amy Maginnis-Honey

DAILY REPUBLIC

FAIRFIELD -- Two decades ago, Lucille Vinsant was sitting in her living room when heir hunters knocked on her door.

After verifying her identity, they told Vinsant a relative had died and Solano County was administering the estate.

Alas, she didn't come into money, but found something richer - a love of genealogy.

"I was too far removed to get anything," Vinsant said of the estate.

However, the heir hunters were kind enough to give her a copy of the family tree. "I found people I didn't know existed," she said.

And, with a little research, she learned the story of her great-great-grandfather, Edward McLean, a California pioneer. Vinsant, 75, has written his story for a recently published book, "Daughters of History."

"There are stories about women who had ranches to run. There's all kinds of good stories," Vinsant said of the book, which not only tells family history, but chronicles the founding of the Golden State.

There are almost 80 narratives in the book drawn from family tradition and manuscripts.

"The deeper you go into the history, the more you understand what the state is about. California is a different cut from the rest. People are free here to think, invent and experience."

Vinsant helped write many of the histories in the book, which marks the centennial of the Daughters of California Pioneers.

McLean, Vinsant learned, was ambitious and headed west when he heard news of the Gold Rush. He paid \$350 for passage aboard the first steamer to San Francisco Bay.

He set foot on San Francisco soil on Feb. 28, 1849.

His wife and four daughters stayed at their comfortable New York home. "They were classy people; they had five servants," Vinsant said.

The family was eventually reunited in California and planted strong roots in San Francisco, where Vinsant grew up. She moved to Fairfield in 1959.

"The Finest Girl in the City," Vinsant read transcripts of diaries to write about her great-aunt, Caroline McLean Chipman Dwinelle.

At one time, the Chipmans owned Alameda. Dwinelle was a strong advocate of early women's liberation.

"To me, these people are real," Vinsant said of the relatives.

"I'd like to meet Caroline. She was a humdinger, beautiful and educated. She spoke French, Spanish and English. Gen. Mariano Vallejo liked her because she spoke Spanish to him."

Dwinelle was married to the man who drew up the charter for the University of California, Davis.

"I had lots of fun doing this," she said of researching and writing about Dwinelle.

She found distant relatives in Vacaville. "I never knew this stuff. To think it all started with a knock on the door," Vinsant said.

Vinsant has traveled the country, always managing to tie in a little genealogy research on the trip.

She has cards from prestigious libraries like the Newberry in Chicago and the Huntington in San Marino.

"I had to get two letters of recommendation and state my specific objective. They even took my picture for it. There are only about 1,800 cards given each year and most of those go to scholars," Vinsant said. "It's the gold card of libraries."

Vinsant was a school teacher for many years and was one of the county's first educators of developmentally disabled children.

Just when "Daughters of History" hit the bookshelves, another Vinsant was joined by another family author. Her cousin James McLean wrote a book on the role California volunteers played in the Civil War.

And, one of her most prized possessions is the 1891 book, "The Early Days and Men of California," written by a distant cousin W. F. Swasey.

"People should know their family history. Young people don't think about their background. If they did, the children would have something to live up to," Vinsant said.

Knowing family history is the most important thing. I wish someone had told me about this years ago."

Vinsant was instrumental in forming the Solano County Genealogical Society, which will celebrate its 20th anniversary April 26.

To purchase "Daughters of History," call Vinsant at 422-5908.

Amy Maginnis-Honey can be reached at amaginnis@dailyrepublic.net.

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Daily Republic/MARK PYNES

Members of the 1936 team (from left) Jack Hopkins, Perry Smith, coach Buck Bailey and Lou Colla remember the great season.

A team for the ages

Armijo's incredible 1936 football team still the best ever

By Paul Farmer

of the Daily Republic

FAIRFIELD - Fifty-eight years later, Bob Gein still feels the disappointment.

A family car that wouldn't start forced the reserve guard on the 1936 Armijo High football team to miss the high-water mark in the school's gridiron history. On Nov. 27, 1936, the Indians beat Patterson, 18-0, to win the Central California championship. The victory, Armijo's seventh straight, capped an 8-0-1 season, still the best record in the school's 68 years of playing football.

"I couldn't get the damn thing to go," said Gein, 73, a retired high school football and basketball coach living in Ukiah. "I had to get out and run into town to make it with the team. They left without me so I didn't get to go.

"That was sad. I would've gotten to play because (starter) Bill Spohn got hurt." The victory over Patterson gave coach Carrol "Buck" Bailey's Indians a two-year record of 13-0-4. In his run at Armijo from 1929-40, Bailey's varsity football teams had four undefeated seasons and won six of the school's nine football league championships.

Bailey "let you know who was boss," said Jack Hopkins, 72, a freshman in 1936 who would later star in basketball at Armijo. "He wouldn't take any guff. If you didn't follow the rules, that was it. Either you abided by them or you didn't play."

"One of the rules I had in football and basketball was, if they were ever caught smoking, they were off the team," said Bailey, still sharp at age 90 and living in a Woodland retirement home. "I didn't care how good they were. That hit the principal (J.E. Brownlee) very well."

Yet Bailey, who coached the A, B and C teams - determined by age, height, weight and ability - in football, basketball, baseball and track, also gained the affection of his players.

"He was great," said George Maves, 74, a sophomore end in 1936 now living in Sacramento. "I always enjoyed playing for him."

"He had more of an influence on me than anything," said Perry Smith, 75, a reserve guard in 1936 now residing in Cobb, just north of Calistoga.

Bailey's influence is still felt in Fairfield, 54 years after he left to coach basketball at Woodland High. In the early 1930s, he coached Ed Hopkins who was a fixture at Armijo until retiring in 1975.

"You'd see old guys get on Ed," said Ron Thompson, former Fairfield High boys basketball coach and 1950 Armijo grad. "They'd say, 'Buck Bailey wouldn't do it that way.' He was a real legend."

None of his football teams was more legendary than his in 1936, even before the first kickoff.

"This is one of the largest turnouts in the history of Armijo," said the Solano Republican, forerunner of the Dailey Republic, just before the season started. "Old-time fans are looking forward to some great games."

The Indians, with their state-of-the-art single-wing offense, didn't disappoint. Their eight victories have been matched by an Armijo team just once (1972) and they finished the year with five straight shutouts, allowing just two touchdowns all season.

Amazingly, Bailey remembers the two opponents that scored - Davis and Winters.

He also recalls the bitterness he felt in the game with Davis, which ended in a 6-6 tie, the only blemish on the Indians' record.

Bailey was certain his team had been robbed of a touchdown, one that would've won the game.

"We had four cracks at the line and didn't make a score," Bailey said. "They (the officials) said we were on the one-inch line. 'It's as close as it can be without it being a touchdown,' the referee said. Hell, he went over by one foot once. I know. We scored a couple of times. We were never on the one-inch line."

The Indians recovered by winning their next seven games, still the longest winning streak in school history.

Winters, the only other team to cross the goal line on them that year, did so in the closing minutes of a 28-6 romp.

"We had a defensive lineman playing defensive back," Maves said of the Winters score, a 55-yard run. "He (Bailey) just put everybody in the game against Winters. Everybody was playing different positions."

Bailey and the Indians were serious when they met Davis on Nov. 13 in a rematch to decide the Solano County Athletic League championship.

A 20-yard run by right halfback Sidney Mack gave Armijo a 6-0 lead in the first quarter. The Indians sealed the 13-0 victory with a 25-yard scoring pass from left halfback Vince Valine to right end Ken Jones.

"He could sure snag 'em," Bailey said of Jones.

A week later, Armijo traveled to Elk Grove to play for the Solano-Sacramento Counties championship.

The Indians threatened four times, but managed just one score, a 4-yard run by Valine in the first quarter.

"He was fast," Bailey remembered of Valine. "We were always lucky we had a tailback." The lone score stood up as Elk Grove drove to the Armijo 10-yard line late in the game but couldn't punch it in.

That earned the Indians the right to travel to Patterson for the Central California championship. It would be the longest road trip ever for an Armijo football team to that point.

"I guess maybe Rio Vista, Dixon and Davis, that was as far as we went in those days," Maves said. "We didn't have bus transportation. We went with our parents."

Some traveled with Brownlee, father of starting center and captain Bill Brownlee. The elder Brownlee was described as "straight-laced" by the student body, but "he gave you a thrill driving," Hopkins said. "Every once in a while, he'd clap his hands and ask the boys how we were doing. You'd hope he'd turn around quick and look at the road."

After completing the trip, including a stop for lunch in Tracy, the Indians started slowly against Patterson, fumbling on their first offensive play.

Early in the second quarter, however, Valine and Jones hooked up on a 50-yard scoring play.

Later in the same quarter, fullback Louie Colla handed the ball off to Mack, who lateralled to Valine, who ran it 19 yards to the one. Valine then powered over to make it 12-0.

Valine also added a 2-yard second-half plunge. Patterson, meanwhile, got just four first downs and "could do nothing against one of the strongest teams ever put out by Carrol Bailey," reported the Solano Republican.

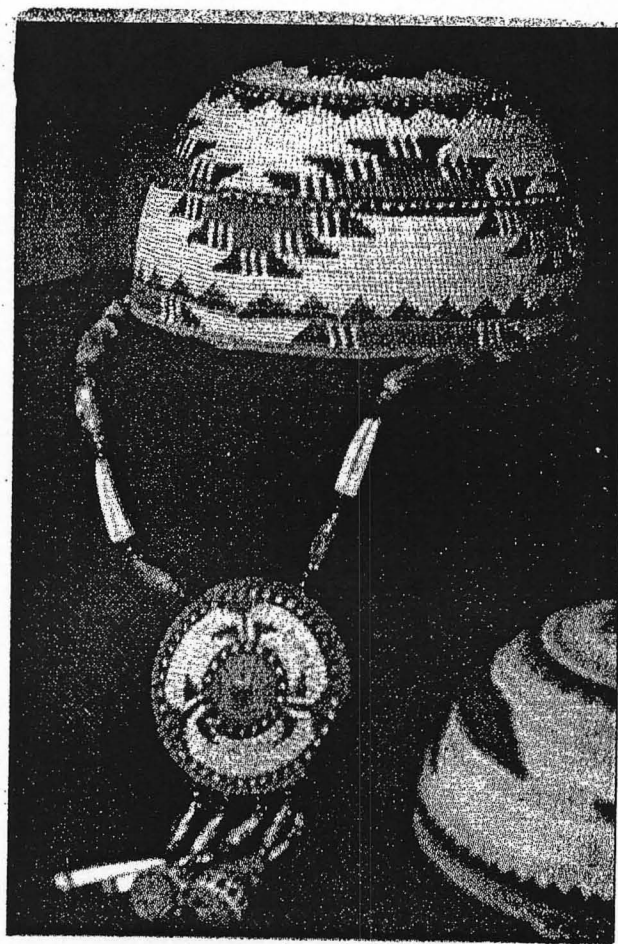
“We had a heckuva time coming home,” said Evo Carvalho, 74, a backup fullback now living in Sacramento. “We enjoyed the win.”

“In those days we didn't go ape like they do today,” said Anselmo Toselli, 73, now a Vallejo resident and once “a wonderful tackle,” according to Bailey. “These guys today go crazy if they make a good play,” Toselli said. “We took it in stride. We all went home with smiles on our faces, not all hopped up.”

As was the tradition of the day, each member of the team received a small gold charm in the shape of a football. “That was No. 1 when you got a girlfriend and were thinking of marrying her,” Carvalho said. “You held onto it to the last minute.”

For nearly six decades, surviving players of the 19-man team have been holding onto memories of what's been the most successful football season in Armijo history. “We were proud of it,” Maves said. “We were the best in Central California at the time. We had a lot of good teams, but that was about the best.”

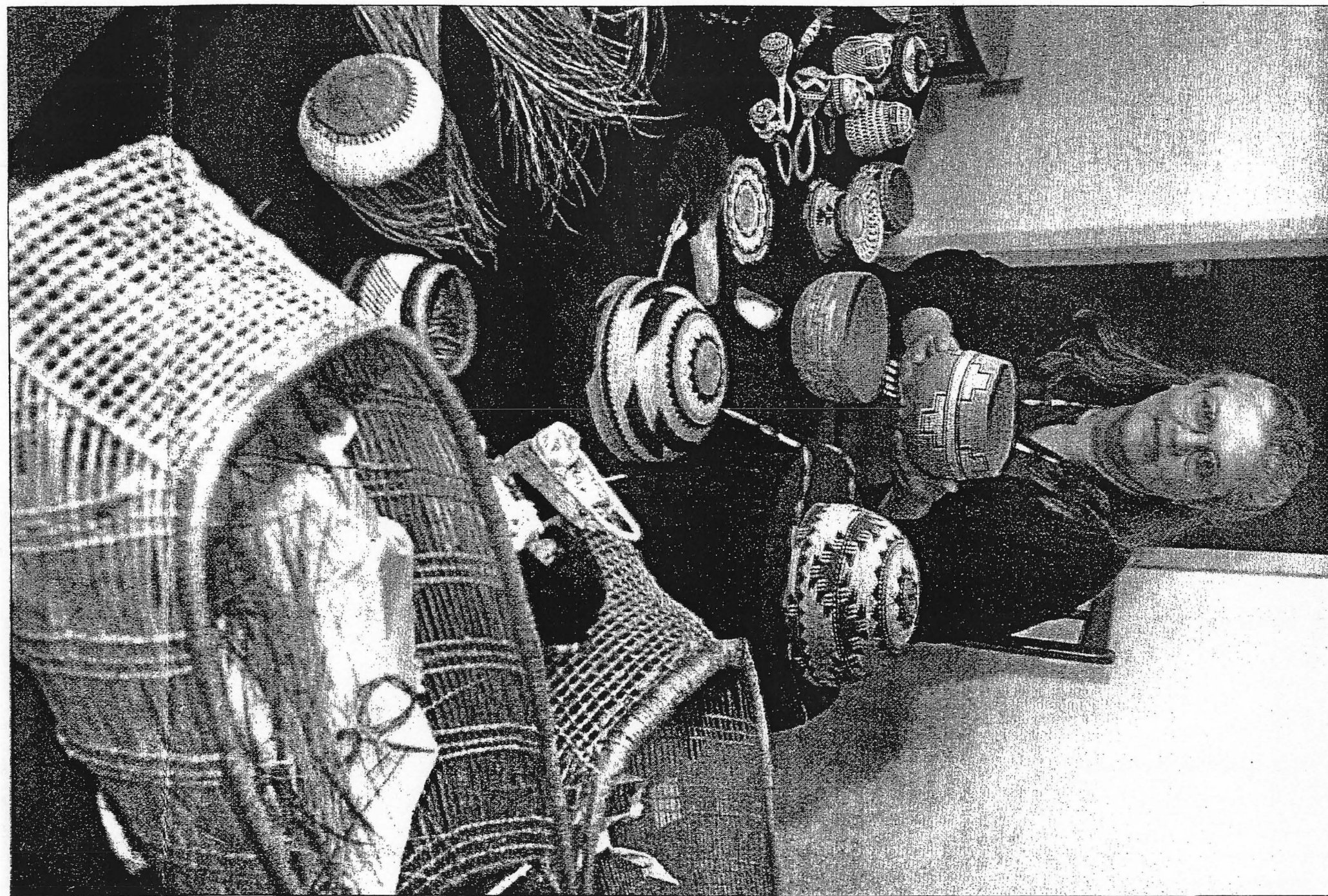
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A ceremonial cap and a medallion, both gifts from her aunt, are part of Wallace's collection.

Treasured history

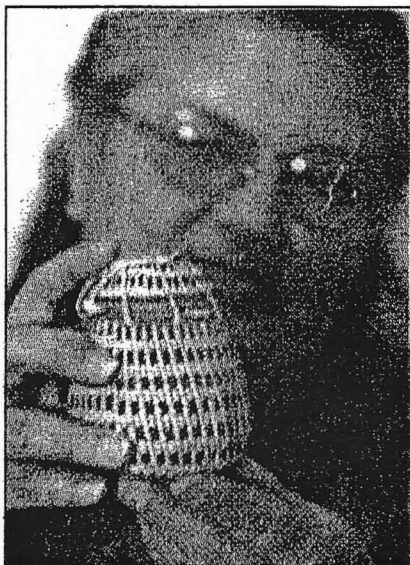
*Local woman
promotes Indian
basketweaving*



Mike McCoy/DAILY REPUBLIC PHOTOS

Kathy Wallace holds a basket that her grandmother gave her. Wallace makes baskets in the old tradition.

By Amy Maginnis-Honey
DAILY REPUBLIC



This is the first tobacco basket Wallace made. She gave it to her mother.

A handwoven basket is more than a utility and art piece to Fairfield's Kathy Wallace. It's part of her culture and the land.

Wallace, 54, is a Native American who is part Karuk and Yurok and a member of the Hoopa tribe. She's also an internationally known basket weaver.

Though her aunt Vivian Hailstone was one of the most noted Indian basket weavers, Wallace didn't learn the art until she was 30. Hailstone was one of the instructors at the first class Wallace took at Davis' DQ University, a tribal college.

"After I'd done it once, I knew I was supposed to be doing it. I just felt right," Wallace said.

Now, she teaches a basketweaving class every

spring at DQU and also serves as a consultant to museums.

That's the easy part of her life.

This is the time of year for gathering willow, spruce root, hazel, fern and bear grass to make the baskets.

"Making the basket is maybe 20 to 30 percent of the time spent," she said. "Maybe even less. The main work is gathering, processing, sorting, trimming and soaking."

Timing is of the essence. "Everything we use is ready at a certain time of the year," she said.

But if she can't find it close by, she'll travel into tribal lands in Klamath and Siskiyou counties to find it.

Members of California Indian Basketweavers Association also share information with each other as to where to find materials their tribe uses for baskets. "That's so different from the way it used to be. Traditionally basketweavers stayed in their own tribal territory," she said.

In order to gather, Wallace has to enlighten different agencies that manage California's land.

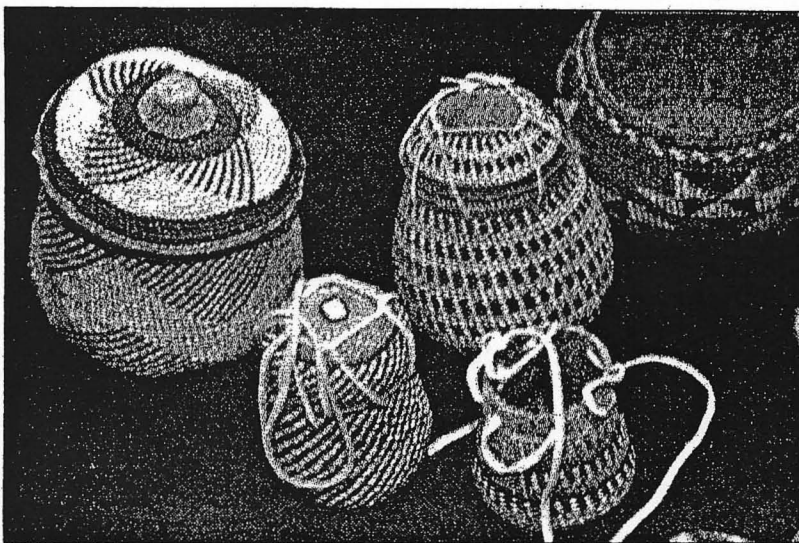
"Advocacy and education is what I do," she said.

"California was a carefully managed environment. Then the parks and forest service came in to keep it a wilderness.

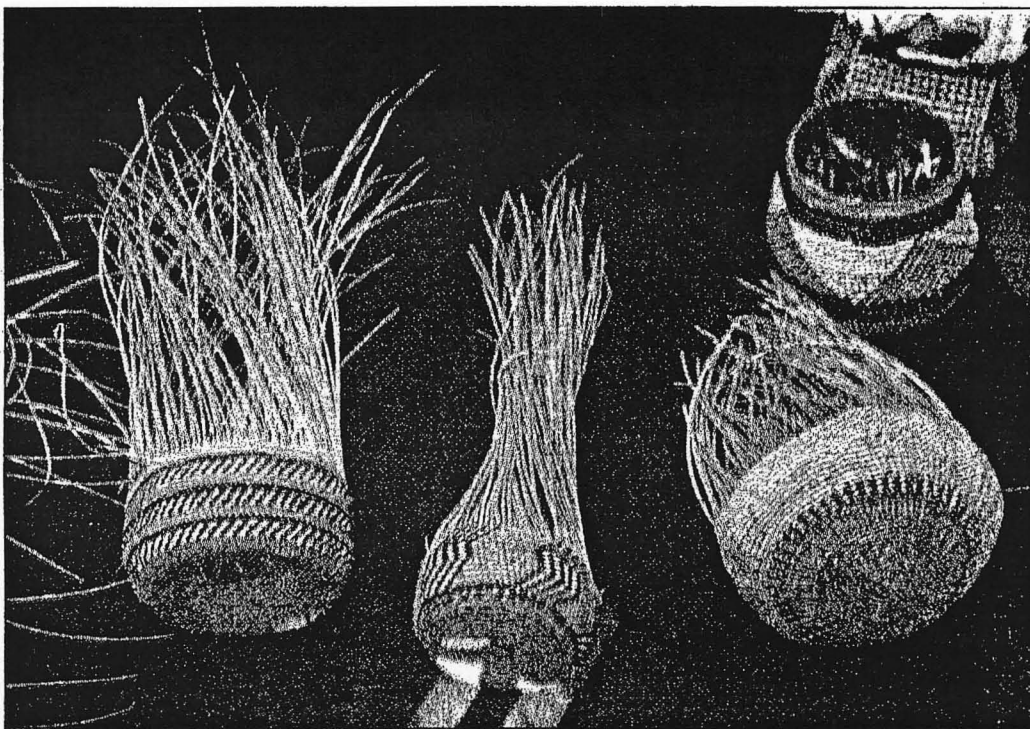
"We thinned, we pruned, we burned. We planted and spread seeds. Now it's against the law to do that.

"The forests are not very healthy today. We try to get them to think of things in a totally different way," Wallace said.

The basketweavers often



A collection of tobacco baskets made by Wallace.



Some baskets in progress. Wallace teaches basketweaving at DQ University in Davis.

need permission to gather their materials. One time it took Wallace 19 phone calls, two days and a two-hour personal interview to get a three-month permit to gather her supplies.

"A lot of this is from oral tradition," she said of how the Native Americans manage the land. "Sometimes it's real hard to convince agencies if these things aren't written down.

"We're up against a lot of things our ancestors never had to worry about. We have to be kind of obsessive.

"Basketweaving is more than art, hobby or craft. It becomes a way of life."

It's never too late to learn

Wallace is one of the driving forces behind the California Indian Basketweavers Association, a 10-year-old group formed to preserve, promote, and perpetuate California Indian basketweaving traditions.

When the group began, there were about 250 basketweavers in the 200 tribes. Now, there are about 500 basketweavers in the state, some of them trained by Wallace.

Wallace came from an artistic family and was looking for her own medium before discovering basketweaving.

Her 27-year-old daughter has also learned the art.

"More and more young people are wanting to get involved," she said. Her students have been as young as 10.

It's never too late to learn, Wallace said, noting that she's had students in their 70s.

"For a while some people were ashamed of basketweaving and saw it as old-fashioned," she explained.

"Baskets connect you to your ancestors, the earth and plants and your future. You have to teach basketweaving if you want it to carry on.

"After they make one basket they learn to appreciate basketry in a way they never have before."

Her students make two baskets during the semester-long course.

Their first effort is undone three times so they learn the basics of getting it started.

She completely undid her first basket three times and estimated there were at least 1,000 man hours in it.

She's given the basket to her father, Davis resident David Risling, who helped launch the Native American Studies program at the University of California, Davis and DQ University.

"You give your first basket away if you want to be a good basketmaker," she explained.

Wallace doesn't keep many of her creations. "I think I give everything away. I don't have a lot of my own in my collection," she said.

That collection does include her grandmother's basket, a necklace done by Hailstone and a baby basket used by her grandchildren.

Her mother, Barbara, keeps a baby basket that nine children have used at various times for about 50 years.

Wallace used it with her own daughter when she got a virus at 6 weeks old and just wanted to be held.

"When I took it into the doctor's office, they all gathered around to look at it," Wallace said. "They kept talking about how it snuggled the baby."

Wallace was also instrumental in bringing a Native American basket exhibit to Sacramento's Crocker Museum in 1997.

"It was the first time in California basketry had been displayed as fine art. Usually it's in the archaeological section," she explained.

She still considers herself a student of basketry. Her goal is to make one of everything.

"The best thing is we're bringing basketweaving back to the tribes that lost it," she said.

"We think of the basket as a living thing. You are putting parts of spirit of the plant and yourself into it," she said.

Preservation of a heritage

Museum explores lifestyle of local Japanese-Americans

By Katherine Kam
Daily Republic Staff Writer

VACAVILLE — Masako Minamide fondly recalled how decades ago, men would cluster in the evenings at her father's store, Ichimoto's on Dobbins Street, to play Japanese checkers or chat. Sometimes, women and children would stop in, too, for candy or Japanese magazines.

"Most of the places were social as well as business," she said, referring to the thriving Japanese businesses that took up two city blocks downtown in the early 20th century.

When World War II broke out, however, Vacaville's sizeable

Japanese-American community was scattered. Unlike Minamide, most did not return.

But the group was close-knit enough that Minamide was able to keep in touch with many families, some who resettled as far away as Los Angeles. With their help, she managed to collect the many artifacts that make up a new Vacaville Museum exhibit that opened Saturday, titled "From Rising Sun to Golden Hills: The Japanese-American Experience in Solano County."

The exhibit will be shown until Sunday, Nov. 27. It highlights periods beginning from the 1880s and '90s, when Japanese immigrants first started to settle in the Vaca and Suisun valleys, lured by the rich farmlands. The displays recapture different time frames into the post World War II era, including the internment period.

Showcases feature Japanese kimonos, dolls, tools, lacquered boxes, china ware, and yellowed steerage checks from steamship passages to America. Old black and white photographs show early Japanese residents in American clothing, such as Western-style suits and Gibson girl outfits and hairstyles. Other pictures feature kimonos and Japanese sports attire, such as the pleated "hakama" pantaloons worn during kendo, a contact sport in which one gains points by striking an opponent in certain spots with a bamboo pole.

Many of the more than 40 Japanese-Americans who donated the artifacts planned to flock back to Solano to see the exhibit.

Before the war, the local Japanese adult population in Solano peaked at about 600, although summer migrant workers could have added another 2,000 to 2,400. By 1902, Japanese owned or rented more than one-third of the orchard lands in Vaca Valley.

Minamide was born in Vacaville in 1918, the daughter of immigrants from Hiroshima. She recalled how a Buddhist temple on Dobbins Street and Monte Vista Avenue served as a focal point for

socializing when she was young. "The Buddhist church was the center of everything," she said, although a few Japanese Christians belonged to a Japanese Methodist church. Since the local Japanese community was small, all occasions were viewed as community events, so some attended both Christian and Buddhist gatherings. Japanese leagues formed within the community for sports that included baseball, basketball, sumo, tennis and ping pong.

"We lived within our own community," Minamide added. The Japanese retained their ethnic identity and rarely mingled with non-Japanese, except for within the educational system. "Socially, very few of us went into each other's homes, but at school, everybody got along fine."

The exhibit features many class photographs sprinkled with Asian



RUTH BEGELL
Museum director



MISAKO MINAMIDE
Returned after WWII

faces.

A "class horoscope" listed nicknames for every student, including the Japanese-Americans. Fred Tsujimoto was "Fritz"; Flora Togame was "Corky"; Shigeru Hayame was "Shiggy Wiggy."

An autograph book shows an entry by student Martha Talbott, dated 1932: "Dear Masako, When you get married and you have a Ford, save me a seat on the running board."

At the back of the gallery, the display of an American schoolroom could be from any small town — the alphabet chalked onto a blackboard, an apple on the old-fashioned pupil desk, a bookend depicting the bust of Abraham Lincoln.

Its mirror image maintains the small town feel with an old wooden desk and chairs. But the details are drastically different — calligraphy on the board, textbooks on Japanese language instruction, and children's picture books in Japanese.

Side by side, the classroom displays show the two worlds of a Japanese-American youth, who frequently attended English-speaking public school during the day, then headed to the local Japanese language school afterward for less than an hour to study culture and reading and writing in the ancestral tongue.

On a bleaker note, one display case shows a letter written to a teacher from a young student in Block F, Barrack Unit 1, Turlock Assembly Center.

During World War II, Solanoans of Japanese descent were most likely to be routed to that center before receiving orders for relocation camp destinations, predominantly the Gila River Relocation Center in Arizona. Many lost farms, businesses and personal possessions during the evacuation.

The case also displays a letter one Japanese-American student from Vacaville Grammar School wrote to her teacher, Mrs. Beelard, weeks after evacuation.

"How's the class? Are they getting along all right? I really hope I could go home...First, when we reached (here) we had to walk about one mile to the camp. They inspect our things and give us rooms. From then on we just play around every day. The other day we had to take the typhoid injection. I was sick the next day..."

The show also alludes to anti-Japanese sentiment in Vacaville, a phenomenon in other Western towns, too. The problem stemmed from economic rivalries with Caucasians because the Japanese were successful farmers and merchants, according to a museum brochure.

The hostility led to legislation in 1924 that curtailed further Japanese immigration. Other laws excluded foreign-born Japanese from buying agricultural land or obtaining citizenship until after World War II, when the laws were repealed.

The exhibit also features a 15-minute video in which Japanese-Americans, including Minamide, recount oral history about Solano's Japanese community. Sun Creative System USA Inc., Japanese developers of a new Vacaville amusement park called the Wooz, donated the funds for the video.

On the tape, Minamide recalls life in Vacaville, including how she married her fiancé, Osanu "Combo" Minamide a week before the war evacuation so they would not be separated.

The newly opened exhibit is not the first time the museum has focused on an ethnic group.

"We try to focus on different groups or different parts of Solano County that people are not aware of," museum Director Ruth Begell said. In the past, the museum has showcased the California Indians. In the future, it plans to do exhibits on the Chinese and Spanish communities in Solano, Begell said.

Two factors combined to spark the project, she noted. Not only did Japanese immigrants flock to

新時代の移民

this area before the turn of the century, but Japanese interest in Solano has been renewed, Begell said.

During the next five months of the exhibit, adults will be admitted for \$1, children for 50 cents, 1 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. Wednesdays through Sundays. Admission is free Wednesdays.

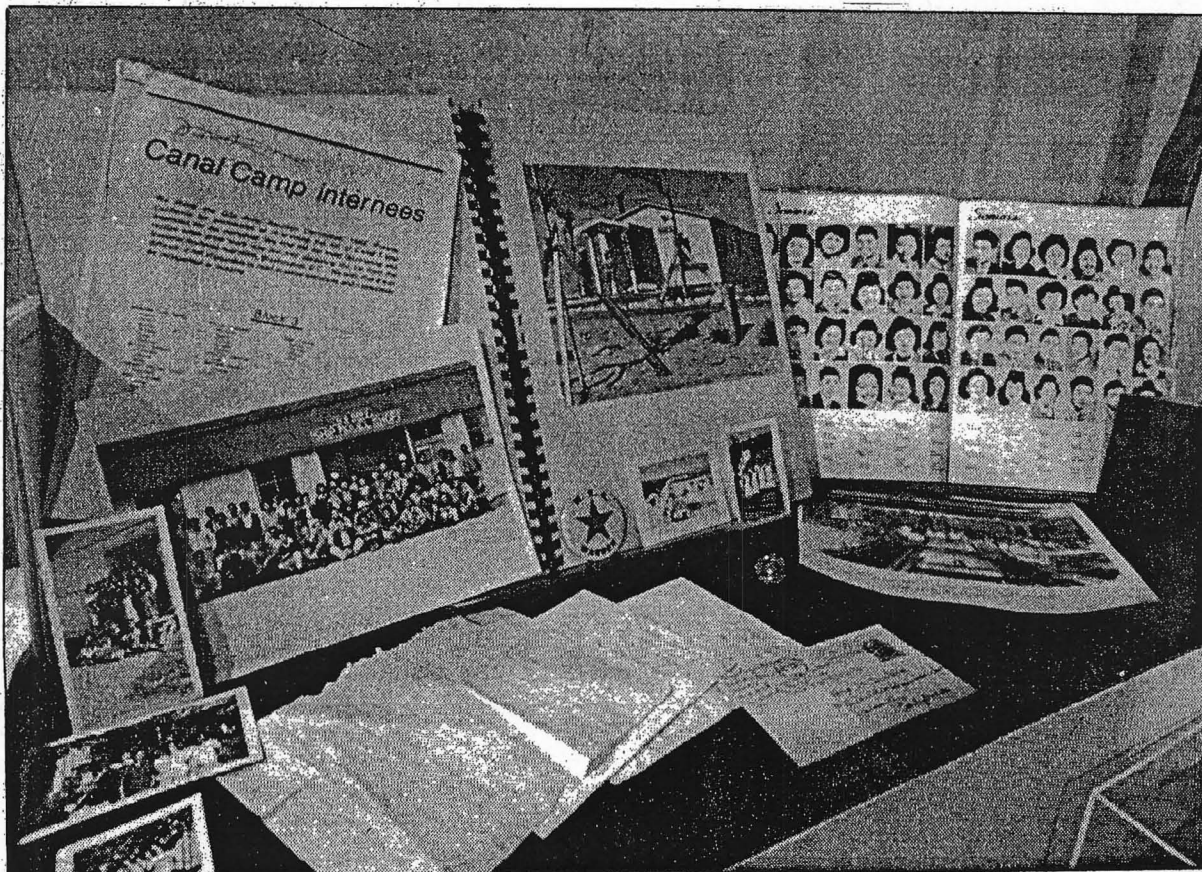
During the summer, the museum will provide several demonstrations for children: origami on July 28, brush writing on Aug. 4, and abacus instruction on Aug. 11. The programs start at 1 p.m. in the museum's courtyard.



DR Photo by Mike Coleman

is display shows a variety of Japanese bowls, plates, cups and other household items. The Vacaville Museum exhibit also

features a schoolroom setting, Japanese dolls and a collection of letters from students and those who were interned.



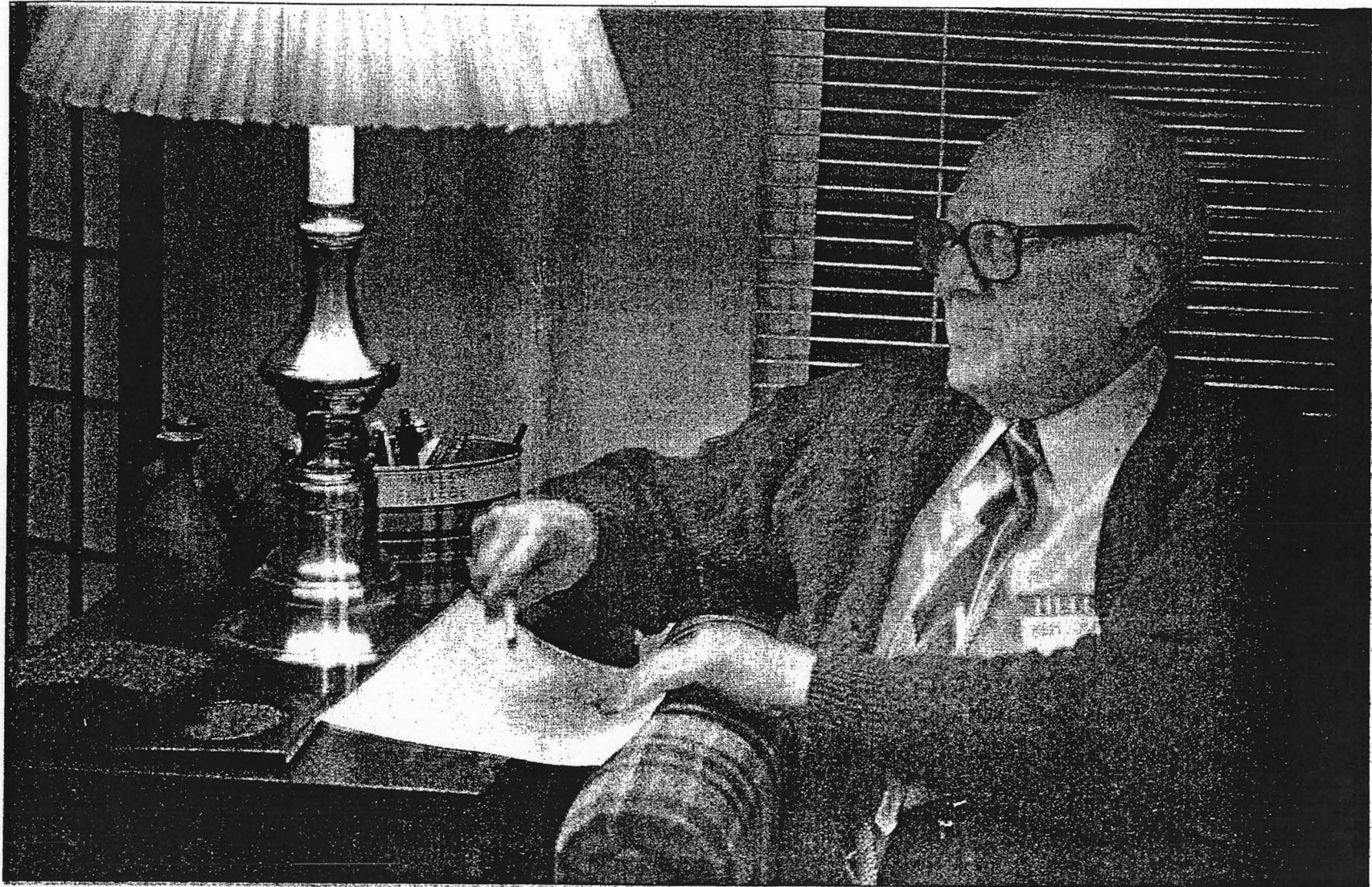
DR Photo by Mike Coleman

Letters written by Japanese-Americans reveal a close-knit lifestyle.

Section C

LIVING

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Mike McCoy/DAILY REPUBLIC

Ken Jones fills in the answers to a history quiz as he watches the video on the history of Fairfield.

Forever Fairfield

History buff loves to educate her neighbors

By Amy Maginnis-Honey
DAILY REPUBLIC

FAIRFIELD — Colleen Jones drove down Waterman Boulevard and wondered where the name came from. There didn't seem to be any water nearby.

Thanks to her neighbor, Marion Card, Jones found out the designation comes from Capt. Robert Waterman, who founded Fairfield.

Jones and her husband of more than 60 years, Ken, were one of four couples attending a recent potluck-supper history lesson hosted by Card.

Card, 85, a former California history teacher at DeAnza College, has helped educate more than 70 of her fellow Paradise Valley Estates neighbors about Fairfield and Suisun's background over dinner, dessert and potluck.

The event usually begins with a video on the history of the area, followed by a quiz. After the mind is fed, the body is nourished.

"I just think it's important for people to know the history of where they live," said Card, who moved to the military retirement community a little more than three years ago after living in Saratoga for more than 50 years.

She and her husband of almost 60 years, Bud, started the event in July, 1999.

Guests sit comfortably in sofas and chairs around the TV. Bud Card prepares the movie while his wife gives instructions.

"Like an old schoolteacher, I'd like your individual attention," she told the most recent group of "students."

She briefly ran down the questions on the test and told her guests they would concentrate on Fairfield.

"There are no prizes," she said. "There are no trips to Hawaii."

A few of the partygoers expressed a sigh of disappointment.

"But you will go home with new



Peg Cutshall, left; Helen Marie Kocher, middle, and Marion Card put out the food for the potluck after the quiz has been taken.

facts about Fairfield. And I consider that a success," Card said.

"I think I know No. 3," Ed Jones proclaimed as the video was about to start.

"Good, keep it a secret," Marion Card said.

Jones couldn't. "I think he built a casino," he joked.

The question was about Chief Solano.

While their visitors watched the film and took the quiz, the Cards made final preparations for dinner.

"Wasn't that packed full of facts?" Marion Card asked at the end of the video.

Helen Marie Kocher was interested in knowing more about Cement, the city that once thrived on Cement Hill.

"There's a good library here," Card suggested.

"They should add to the film about Paradise Valley Estates," Jim Hughes suggested.

There was no formal grading of the test. Everyone was on the honor system.

Ken Jones garnered some new

knowledge about the area he now calls home.

As a pilot, he flew into Travis Air Force Base several times between 1956-67. He and his wife moved to Paradise Valley Estates in April, 1999.

Both came via Missouri.

"Learning is painless this way," said Peg Cutshall, who has lived in San Diego and San Francisco.

"I have a much better idea how the expansion (of the area) took place," added her husband, Pete.

"If you come here from the East, as we do, you see a different approach to building. They've done such a beautiful job out here," he added.

Card loves to entertain.

"I'm a party girl. On my tombstone it will say 'I was never late to a party,'" she said.

She keeps a guest book of all the visitors to her home. That way she also knows who has taken the history quiz.

"I'm the 'go-fer' guy," Bud Card said of his role.

"Most of the neighbors are quite

**A sample of the questions asked at the
Cards' history parties:**

1. Who named Fairfield and why?
2. Who were the immigrant labor groups?
3. After California's statehood, how did Capt. Robert Waterman arrange to obtain the county seat in Fairfield?
4. What was the lifestyle of Patwin Indian tribes who lived in the Solano region for centuries?
5. In 1902, on the hill above Fairfield, the town of Cement was a thriving village. What made it prominent and what caused its closure?

ANSWERS ON PAGE C2

interested. When we tell them about it they want to know if they can come," he said.

"There's always new people coming in," Marion Card said. "They are glad to learn about the city."

The video and quiz give them something to talk about over dinner.

"This is one of the nicest places to grow old," Marion Card said.

She's appropriately been named Paradise Valley Estates historian.

"I guess because of my white hair," she joked.

She documents events in word and pictures. In three years, Card has produced 17 books.

"I was going to zip my lip when I came up here and not do all these things," she said.

That would be pretty hard for Card.

She helped found Saratoga's Sister City program with Muko-Shi, Japan, and trained the docents for the city's famed Hakone Gardens.

Card also helped start Friends of the Saratoga Library and served as its third president.

She was named Saratoga's Citizen of the Year in 1986 and Volunteer of the Year three years later.

Amy Maginnis-Honey can be reached at amaginnis@dailyrepublic.net.

Many strange encounters in Solano County

By Mary Ann Murdoch
of the Daily Republic

FAIRFIELD — Close encounters with extraterrestrials apparently are not alien to Solano County residents, several of whom have reported sightings and other odd occurrences during their lives.

Their stories may sound unbelievable or out of the realm of the fantastic, but they all maintain that "something" definitely happened to them.

■ ■ ■

Two Fairfield men — David and Allan, who requested their last names not be used — went on a hunting trek Oct. 13, 1991, at Squaw's Peak near Roger's Canyon in the Sierras. The longtime friends and experienced hunters were looking for deer.

"It started that Saturday night," David said. "We knew the place well. Then, strange things began happening to both of us."

David told of "apparitions of

'It flew through the trees, landed head downward, and looked like it was in an attack stance.'

— David,
UFO observer

David said he and his friend both snapped photos, and they claim to have a photo of the lizard creature in the tree.

He also claimed seeing portions of what he thought was a space ship camouflaged with bushes, trees and underbrush, and saucer-like objects.

"We didn't report this to the local police, but we talked to people in Susanville and they said the police there had had numerous reports of sightings and lights going on for some time."

■ ■ ■

Fairfield resident Jacqueline, age 27, said she experienced an event when she was a teenager that has never left her.

She recalled being about 15, living in San Francisco across from a park-like area. One night she went to the window and saw "a craft-like thing with lights on the bottom."

Jacqueline said she felt "disoriented, and I kept watching the clock on the fireplace mantel, but time seemed to be out of whack somehow."

She was "afraid, curious and excited. I yelled to everyone else in the house — my stepmother, my father, sister and brother — they all came and they all saw it," she said.

Some time afterward, and living in Oakland, she began experiencing odd dream-like occurrences where short creatures would come into her room, sit on her bed and "they seemed to be trying to get my attention, or wake me up. They seemed to be saying, 'Are you ready? It's time to go.'"

Her mother reported having similar experiences of short beings sitting on her bed, she said.

At other times, Jacqueline was mysteriously compelled to stay up at night and watch out the window, she said.

"I then had a nervous breakdown and was at Kaiser in Martinez. As part of my therapy, I went to art class. I made this mask out of clay that ended up looking like the creatures. I kept it for a while, then I threw it away because it was so disturbing to me."

"All I know is that when I think about it or talk about it, I get a weird, disturbing sensation all over."

■ ■ ■

Fairfield resident Mary was living in a second-floor apartment in Pinole 19 years ago when she went into her bathroom and, through the window that faced the street, saw a metal cylindrical object hovering down the middle of the road.

"It moved down the two-block-long street and then it went between my apartment building and the one next to it," she said.

Mary went to the other side of her apartment to follow its course, and saw it hovering there six to 10 feet outside her balcony door.

"As soon as I stepped onto the balcony, it stopped. It was as though it sensed I was there. I called my daughter (age 13) to look at it and she said she saw it, then went back to her room as though nothing unusual happened."

Mary thought her daughter's reaction was odd, "because this girl is the most nosy, curious kid in the world. But, to this day when I ask her about it, she says she remembers seeing 'something,' but won't say anything else about it."

The object was about six or eight feet long, and had some sort of light array underneath, Mary said. It was silent.

"I didn't feel fear. But I was frozen," Mary recalled. "Then it slowly went up into the air, and I watched it until it was out of sight."

She checked with local authorities and the military, and they said nothing was going on in that area at that time.

"I checked around the apartment complex, and people said they weren't aware of anything," Mary said. "I can't believe nobody else saw this. Or, they did see it and just weren't talking."

■ ■ ■

Elsbeth Saint-Ives said she saw a strange object in 1959 when she was a senior at Mills College in Oakland.

"Four of us decided to drive up to Cal (Berkeley), and we had a convertible," said Saint-Ives of Vacaville. "It was about 5 p.m. and when we got to the Oakland hills, there was a silverish sphere that appeared, then it flew parallel to our car for about two or three miles."

She estimated the object was about two miles away at the time, and emitted a "fuzzy glow," she said. "It wasn't bright, but had a sort of undercolor like metal would produce with light shined on it."

Saint-Ives recalled neither she nor her companions were afraid.

"I think we (humans on Earth) occupy a small portion of the universe," she said. "It's arrogant to assume that we are the only ones."

She raised the point that there may be a "purposeful indoctrination of fear" in society, which portrays most UFO encounters as scary or evil in movies, books and television.

"It may be that they don't want people to report seeing things; or frighten them so much they won't want to say anything," she said.



J. Baxter of Fairfield submitted this written account:

"One early morning in 1974, my brother woke me up and told me to follow him. I followed into my parents' room. Bobby woke up my mom and told her there was a UFO in the back yard.

"Mom, without even bothering to check on this, and believing her 5-year-old son, called the Air Force base and talked to the commanding officer. He asked if the ship had little green men. Mom asked Bobby. Bobby said yes.

"Mom repeated his reply and the officer — he was quiet for a moment — and then told her it was too early in the morning to be talking."



In late summer of 1987, Scott, of Fairfield, was working nights in Suisun City as a security guard when he and three friends saw something that looked like "a ball of fire going across the sky."

"It stopped suddenly, then it seemed to explode and leave a trail of sparks and a green glow," Scott said.

He had access to a radio scanner and said he picked up communications at Travis Air Force Base saying there was an object hovering over the South Gate at Travis. Then another voice came on and said to "maintain radio silence."

Scott wondered what he — and officials at Travis — may have seen

t, who said he's always been fascinated with UFO phenomena, remembered another encounter in 1978.

He and his older brother were at Clear Lake Highlands in Lake County when they saw "two brilliant bluish-white objects — very intense light — just above tree level," Scott said. "We estimated their speed was about 200 miles per hour. What was striking is that they stopped instantly, then would start up again at great speeds, then they went straight up."



This was submitted by Charles E. Staats of Fairfield: "I would like to relate an event concerning UFOs that took place in 1947. I was 17 years old and the sighting was in Vallejo.

"I was in the back yard doing some work on my ham radio antennas. After climbing down the radio tower, I looked up from the ground and to my surprise the sky was full of glittering objects. They were going from east to west and were directly overhead. There were hundreds of them, in the shape of a saucer, about 25 feet in diameter and about 10,000 feet in the air; very shiny and flipping end over end about every second. They made no noise. They were not birds or balloons because they were too well-defined.

"I ran into the house and told my mother to hurry outside. She gazed into the sky and said, 'I cannot believe what I am seeing.' She called my father, who was at work in his furniture store. He and his employees also witnessed the event. I climbed over the

fence and called to our next door neighbor, a lieutenant commander at Mare Island. He and his family also witnessed it. About this time, the UFOs were gone. They had come and gone in about 15 minutes. We all estimate their speed as 'very fast.'

"The next day we all talked about what we had seen. One neighbor said it must have been our imaginations and thought it best we not report it.



Rick Hoffman of Lodi said he and his family experienced an encounter in 1984 or '85 when they lived in Walnut Creek.

"We lived in an unincorporated area with hiking and riding trails all over, and we were out walking on one of the trails on a spring day, mid-afternoon, when I had the sensation that something was overhead.

"I looked up and there was a triangular, wedge-shaped object about 100 feet above us," said Hoffman, 45, who added that he didn't feel afraid. "It was silverish-metallic and made no noise."

He estimates its size was about 25 feet long and 40 to 60 feet wide. He and his wife and two young children watched for about 10 seconds, then Hoffman said "it rolled over, inverted like an arrowhead, and flew away at great speed until it disappeared." When they got back to their house, they sat on the front porch and Hoffman asked his wife, "Do you realize what we just saw?"

'As soon as I stepped onto the balcony, it stopped. It was as though it sensed I was there. I called my daughter to look at it and she said she saw it, then went back to her room as though nothing unusual had happened.'

— Mary,
UFO observer

Historian traces Pony Express, schedules recreation of journey

By Barry Eberling
of the Daily Republic

FAIRFIELD — Joe Nardone plans to don buckskin this April and ride through downtown Vacaville and Fairfield on horseback, recreating a journey of the Pony Express.

Few people probably think of the original Express riders traveling along an unpaved Texas Street, passing the small number of wooden buildings that existed in Fairfield during the early 1860s. Few historians either, if one trusts past writings on the topic.

But Nardone, who will pass through Solano County on a 72-mile ride from Sacramento to Oakland in part to promote his upcoming book on the Pony Express, says this is an oversight.

"I know exactly what it did," the Sacramento resident. "I spent the last six years of my life researching the history of the Pony Express."

Nardone's book, "In Search of the Pony Express," is set to come out in 1993.

The Pony Express was a storied but short-lived venture, beginning on April 3, 1860 and ending only 19 months later. Its goal was to get mail and telegrams from San Francisco to New York by horseback in about 10 days.

Riders usually stopped in Sacramento and took a steamer to San Francisco. But Nardone has dug up old newspaper accounts that show they rode through Solano County on at least seven occasions when they missed the boat.

It's not difficult to guess what route the riders took, he said.

"The Benicia-to-Sacramento trail

I know exactly what it did. I spent the last six years of my life researching the history of the Pony Express.

— Joe Nardone,
historian

was well-established," Nardone said. "Stage coaches rumbled across it and it was hard-packed."

According to newspapers, the Pony Express first passed through the county on April 23, 1860, its second trip. Indians had stolen horses in Utah Territory and delayed the rider, Sam Hamilton, Nardone said.

Hamilton missed the boat in Sacramento and decided to continue on by horseback.

"He did an amazing ride," Nardone said. "He was moving 10 miles per hour at night."

Contra Costa papers tell how Hamilton arrived at Benicia, where Tom Bedford took over. Bedford crossed the Carquinez Strait by boat, then rode on to Oakland.

Nardone's planned journey by horseback over the local Pony Express route should be a cinch, compared to what he did last spring. He rode the old Pony Express route from St. Joseph, Mo., to Sacramento, covering what remains of about 1,800 miles of dusty trails.

Spending nine hours daily in the saddle for three months might seem like a tough way to promote a book.

But, despite some sore body parts initially, the journey was worth it, Nardone said.

"It was a small adventure I didn't put any holds on, and it got out of hand," Nardone said with a laugh.

Much of the trail is now been plowed under for corn and other crops or paved over for roads, Nardone said. Other parts remain close to their pristine states, he said.

"I'm probably the only person who could tell anyone where the whole trail is," said Nardone, who spent years researching the route before he jumped into the saddle.

Nardone expects to have little trouble riding down paved streets in Vacaville and Fairfield, or even a small stretch of Interstate 680. Other cities, such as Sacramento and Salt Lake City, allowed him to use their streets during his summer journey.

Nardone will carry letters on this local ride for \$50 apiece. He hopes to raise enough money for trail markers that would be put up in Solano County if Congress declares the Pony Express route a national trail. A bill is currently pending.

Local history buffs have been unable to find any mention in Solano County papers of the Pony Express, said Bert Hughes of the Solano Historical Society. But that isn't so surprising, he said.

"To the people of the time, that wouldn't have been a big deal," Hughes said. "The Wells-Fargo (stagecoach) was going by every day or week. So the Pony Express wouldn't have meant that much."



Daily Republic/MARK PYNES

Joe Nardone holds a Mochila — a replica of the Pony Express saddle covering.

Area sentiments anything but civil during war between states

By Ian Thompson

Daily Republic Staff Writer

FAIRFIELD — Although no blood was shed on a field of battle in California during the American Civil War, the state — and Solano County — was not untouched by the conflict.

The farthest west the war between the states was carried was into the Arizona territory, where Confederate and Union troops skirmished, but the feelings over slavery and states rights traveled farther still.

Solano County was affected by conflicts between settlers supporting the cause of the South and those supporting the cause of the North.

Some towns, such as Benicia and Vallejo, were staunchly Union, mainly due to the Mare Island Shipyards of the United States Navy in Vallejo and the

Our Solano Heritage



U.S. Army Arsenal in Benicia.

The arsenal, under command of Army officer Julian Allister, shipped large quantities of arms to the east, especially to the New York Arsenal, for use by the Army of the Potomac. It also equipped some of the volunteers from California, Oregon and Nevada who went east to fight.

Advocates of the Confederacy were not in the majority in Solano County, but they were visible. In Dixon, a secessionist paper was established in early 1863, only to

be viciously attacked by Union supporters and soon closed down.

Other parts of the county, such as the Rockville area and locations around Vacaville, had a considerable number of Southern supporters.

In Rockville, much of the antagonism centered around the Rockville Chapel, which housed a congregation of the Methodist Episcopal Church South, brought to the county by settlers from the south in the 1850s.

One minister was a staunch advocate of Southern rights and made no bones about it in his sermons. While many of his parishioners had Southern sympathies, many others supported the Union.

The growing rift in the congregation split wide open in 1863

See Civil, Page A12

Civil

om Page One

When the Northerners started singing "The Battle Cry Of Freedom" and "Glory to the Republic" at Sunday Christmas services.

The Southern supporters retaliated by placing a plaque over the church's doorway with the inscription, "M.E. Church South, 56."

Angered, Northern supporters left to start their own church in Fairfield.

It wasn't the end. The minister apparently stirred up even more Union anger; accounts say he left on a few steps before a tar and feather mob.

As a result of the break, the small church was unable to recover after the war. According to historian Wood Young, "the Civil War wounds healed slowly and the cemetery located next to the chapel) grew larger than the congregation."

Vacaville and Denverton were considered hotbeds of secessionism in Solano County, something that a staunchly unionist Solano County Herald in Suisun City seldom passed up the chance to point out.

An Aug. 15, 1863 article in the Herald was a good example. "Look Out," stated the article. "The copperhead (nickname for Confederate-leaning Northerners) canvassers profess to be good, gooder, goodest Union men, in places where the Union element is three or four to one copperhead; just hear them talk when they get to such places as Vacaville, where the Seceshes are nearly equal to the loyal voters!"

One victim of this rancor between Union and Confederate supporters was Vacaville's chance to become one of the state's first college towns.

The Pacific Methodist College was established in Vacaville by leaders of the Methodist Episcopal Church South in 1861. During the early 1860s, the college gained considerable standing, with its enrollment climb-

ing to 165 students.

Many members of the church there were openly pro-South. The pro-Union animosity toward them transferred itself to the college.

A May 24, 1864 article told of an incident that happened when a company of Union cavalry passed through Vacaville by way of the college.

According to the paper, the college president's wife showed the stars and stripes from the building, bringing cheers from the cavalymen. But this was "greatly to the disgust of the copperhead students," the paper said.

As a result, "the president apologized for the indiscretion of his wife" to the students. Not appeased, said the paper, they created a Confederate flag with plans to raise it on the college, only to be put off by hints the college would be burned to the ground.

A subsequent article corrected the story, saying no Confederate flag was made, but the feelings were

quite indicative of the town.

On April 28 a year later, shortly after Lincoln's assassination, the hints became real.

At 3 a.m. fire broke out at the college. Some furniture was saved, but the building was destroyed. Arson was at fault.

"The conclusion is irresistible that the fire was the work of some dastardly wretch who sought thus to vent his spite against those having charge of the institution," said the Herald, "whether prompted by personal feeling or partisan animosity; though we are slow to believe that anyone who has shared the grief which has so recently overwhelmed the nation, caused by democratic lawlessness, would resort to kindred measures to express his disapproval of the stand taken by the president and faculty of the college."

The fire hit the college's funds hard. A building was rebuilt, but in 1870 the college relocated to Santa Rosa, where it stayed until closing in 1903.

Old Archive Story

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Bike collector pedals through history

By Charles Levin

DAILY REPUBLIC

FAIRFIELD - Bicycles are no laughing matter to Gary Cook, even if you do think the "high wheelers" lining the walls of his Authorized Bicycle Shop on Texas Street came from some Charlie Chaplin movie.

A mistaken notion, Cook said. These bicycles preceded Chaplin by decades. You know the ones - the monstrosities with one humongous front wheel and a teeny rear wheel.

The high wheelers, like every other rare bike in Cook's Fairfield and Vallejo stores, were vital endeavors. In fact, high wheelers were the first form of transportation that could go faster than a horse, the preferred mode of the time. "Every single one of them was very serious," Cook said, removing a cover from an authentic, late-1940s Chinese rickshaw in the back of the Fairfield shop.

Cook's store is a virtual Smithsonian of cycles. In fact, the Smithsonian Institution has borrowed some of Cook's bikes for traveling exhibits. Between the two stores, Cook owns a chronological history of all things two-wheeled.

There are pedal-less 1817 Draisins, 1870 velocipedes and 20th-century scooters, like you might imagine jetting down the Atlantic City boardwalk. In the back of the Fairfield shop, Cook is restoring a "quad" racing bike for four riders, circa 1899.

Hanging from the ceiling are an 1899 Wolf American side-by-side three-wheeled tandem and a 1951 Schwinn Black Phantom with large fenders, chain guard and a button horn mounted under the cross rail.

"That was the bike that everyone wanted when I was growing up," said the 57-year-old Cook. "I was so poor that I didn't dream of owning one."

The bike's previous owner, who attended junior high school with Cook in Vallejo, won it in a Duncan yo-yo contest.

"His mom passed away 12 years ago and when he went to clean out his garage, he found the bike," Cook said.

On the opposite wall hangs a 1914 Pierce Cushion Frame (built by the Pierce Arrow automobile company), rigged with shock absorber-like devices.

Over the years, Cook's collection has earned a lot of recognition. Today, Hollywood rents some of his bikes.

The rickshaw appeared in "The Joy Luck Club." A blue and white 1956 Schwinn Spitfire with oversized wheel fenders played a prominent part in an A&W root beer commercial.

A Vallejo native, Cook got interested in cycles as a bike messenger in San Francisco. His parents moved there when he was 16, but he moved back to Vallejo after rejecting the local high school in the Mission District.

Eventually, he finished high school and got a job in a local bike shop.

In 1968, at 28, he opened a store in Vallejo with his Fairfield neighbor, Bill Connor, a retired Air Force pilot. The two opened a second shop in Richmond in 1971, just as the 10-speed bike boom hit the country, Cook said.

Connor and Cook amicably parted as business partners a year later while Connor continued to operate in Richmond. Later, Connor relocated to Fairfield, where Cook now operates. Connor died in 1987, and Cook, coming full circle, bought the business.

The seeds for collecting rare bikes were planted when a then-16-year-old Cook worked at Shaver's Toy Land in Vallejo. A co-worker's father owned a high-wheeler. Sometimes the employee rode it to work and would occasionally let Cook ride it.

By the mid-1970s, Cook employed a man who collected the rare bikes - first a high-wheeler, then an 1899 tandem. Later the employee begged for a leave of absence to ride the high-wheeler from Detroit to Philadelphia in the United States' bicentennial (the 100th anniversary of the bicycle's introduction to the United States - in the city of Brotherly Love).

Later on, Cook acquired a 1930 ladies' Iver Johnson, which he spotted in the window of a San Francisco junk shop.

"It just kind of evolved," said Cook, who doesn't ride that much anymore. "Each bike has its own history."

Cook has 80 bikes, so we'll dispense with the anecdotes. But the man is a literal bicycle Britannica.

Explore Cook's massive collection of rare literature, catalogs and posters - filling four file cabinets in Vallejo - and delve into a world of inventors, ancillary companies and various women's fashion trends (bloomers, pedal pushers) created so the fair sex could ride.

Before the bicycle, the first mass-produced consumer product was the gun, followed by the sewing machine. To date, no invention has spawned as many patents as the bicycle, he says. Examples? Ball bearings, inflatable tires, drive shafts. Many of the early ones (and their inventors) played a role in aviation, motorcycles and automobiles.

"Whenever something is popular, too many people get in the business," Cook said wryly.

A tribute to this observation fills the back room in the Vallejo shop on Georgia Street. Part of the collection is devoted to bicycle bloopers, innovations-to-be, most of which tanked before or just after they hit the market. There's the Tokheim drive, an unwieldy and overly heavy gear-shifting device, built by the company of the same name that also built gas station pumps. The impetus? The late 1970s gas crisis. Someone at the company decided it was time to branch out. It flopped.

Then there's the 50-speed Bio-Cam, mostly seen for a first and last time in a copy of Popular Science in 1980 - other than a few prototypes, like Cook's, that showed up at trade shows.

Or the ultra-aerodynamic Blue Centurion, built by Shimano, one of the bike industry's leading parts manufacturers. The cycle was touted to reduce wind drag by 22 percent - until they discovered with a human riding, it was only 1 1 / 2 percent.

One entrepreneur peddled an invention to Cook for his opinion. Cook rendered a less-than-positive appraisal. Good idea, but little market for the product, Cook recalls. Later when the inventor visited the legendary back room, he lowered his head in humiliation at an epiphanic moment, realizing the product was destined to blooper status in those very shelves.

"The basic concept of a bike is the simpler it is, the better, and people can't seem to let it alone," Cook said.

It's a philosophy that permeates Cook's office in Vallejo, noticeably uncluttered and devoid of a computer or fax machine.

When customers ask for the fax number, he tells them, "We don't have a fax machine, but we do have a calculator. We bought it last week."

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Third graders roll back time

By Melanie Reyes

of the Daily Republic

FAIRFIELD - Students from Apple Valley School Class of 1854 sang songs and rattled off the names of presidents at a graduation ceremony held Thursday.

Kay Ritchey and Jackie Lillis' third grade classes at Bransford Elementary School turned the clock back to 1854 and attended a one room schoolhouse called Apple Valley.

"We've been doing our social studies about local history," Ritchey said. "(Graduation) is a culmination of our studies."

Students sang "Oh, Susanna" and "She'll be coming around the mountain" and recited their times tables at the ceremony.

Afterward, they had a picnic lunch and played traditional games such as blind man's bluff and drop the hanky, and held a potato sack race.

The students in both classes dressed up in costumes and assumed the identity of local people, such as the Vallejos, Chadbournes, Lows, Smiths and Glashoffs, Ritchey said.

"They know all about the people who made up the county at the time," she said. Ritchey said students came to school dressed in their outfits, brought their lunches in baskets or kerchiefs and did chores such as bring water and firewood to the "school."

These challenges are reminiscent of what students did at that time, Ritchey said. Audrie Smith liked assuming a new identity. Living in the 1800s was different than the 1990s, she said.

"It's hard to be a kid in 1854 because you have to do these chores like milking and feeding the cow and getting water from the stream or well," Smith said. Teachers were very strict, Ritchey said. Punishments ranged from making the children wear dunce caps to slapping their knuckles with a ruler.

"Life was tougher and there were stricter rules," Mike Engell said.

The children learned a lot from their project, Lillis said. They could name the 14 presidents in order, up to the present one, Franklin Pierce. They learned to churn butter, quilt, write with a quill pen and use slates instead of paper. They even used a different flag salute.

Kids in 1854 didn't watch television. They played by the riverbank, read a book or went on walks, Sharon Bloom said.

Jackie Albright, a teacher at Dan O. Root in Suisun City, has simulated the 1854 school for the past two years.

"I hope it raises awareness of history and whets their appetites for history," she said.

student Jennifer Davis agreed. Other people should do it because it makes history more fun and more interesting.

Copy Story to Production

Area roads named for early settlers

By Nancy Malich

Daily Republic Staff Writer

FAIRFIELD — Because the street is being realigned, the Fairfield planning department considered changing the name of Oliver Road to Travis Boulevard this spring.

But members of the Oliver family objected, saying that five generations of Olivers still live in the area.

The planning department decided not to change the road's name.

The Olivers are among a number of local descendants whose ancestors were the first to settle this area. Some county and city streets bear their names and historians have culled together facts about their past.

Some early settlers came for the gold rush. Some were merchants, farmers, politicians. Some family lines flourished. Others have little more than street names left in their memory.

John M. Oliver came across the plains in 1872 and lived in Suisun City, where he was superintendent of the waterworks.

His son — also named John M. Oliver — moved to the ranch along Oliver Road in 1918 and lived there until his death in 1973. The original Suisun City settler's grandson, John M. Oliver Jr., lives in Fairfield and runs the orchard now.

Morrison Lane in Suisun Valley was named after the family that lived in a house where the Albright ranch is now. Josiah Zebriski Morrison came from Michigan to California for gold in 1855, his great-great-granddaughter Judy Bates said.

His nine grandchildren — including a county supervisor and Suisun City mayor — were all born in the house where the Albright land is now.

Bill, the supervisor, named the road Morrison in the 1950s. Bill's brother Clarence was living on the road too, and since there were two Morrisons there, "I think he just

modestly named it after himself," grandnephew Lane Morrison said.

Harry Chadbourne thinks his grandfather Frederick must be the one for whom Chadbourne Road was named. Frederick owned 100 acres alongside the road in Suisun Valley, his grandson said.

Harry Chadbourne was a Gordon Valley Fire District chief and assistant chief for years before his retirement. As a member of the Native Sons of the Golden West, he has tried to trace back his family roots in California to 1850.

The Chadbournes aren't in old history books about this area, he said, because subjects of the books had to pay for a writeup and his progenitors wouldn't do that.

He knows his great-grandfather Joseph Roberts voted in the Nov. 2, 1852 general election in Suisun Valley, however. His great-grandfather came from Maine, where the first Chadbournes arrived from England in 1631.

"That's something I'm real proud of. Damn few people can say that."

The original Chadbourne to settle in California, Joseph Roberts, had five children. In the next generation, Frederick Chadbourne had four. One — Chadbourne's father Rutherford — had four, too. And almost all of the offspring made their living in agriculture, Harry said.

Chadbourne's grandfather's land was planted in apricots in 1898.

Chadbourne himself now grows trees of a different kind. He runs a Christmas tree farm and raises walnuts as well. His land at the top of Gordon Valley Road is in Napa County.

From growing up in Solano County, however, he remembers tidbits of other families whose names are now dedicated to roads, too.

Abernathy Lane is a road that brings back a memory of the house whose stone foundation was later incorporated in a handful of other buildings in the valley after the house burned, he said, during the



This photograph of the Morrison family pictures, back row, left to right, Clarence, Bessie, Dan, Emily, Bill and Jim. Shown in the front row, from left, are Grandpa Josiah Zebriski, Mother Frances, Julian, Father William Henry (Harry) and Gladys.

1906 earthquake.

George Abernathy was the first Abernathy born in the valley, in 1869, according to local history books. His father Linaeus is reported to have arrived in the area in 1864.

Mankas Road was named after Christley Manka, who crossed the plains in 1849. He started Manka's Corner store.

Gordon Valley Road is named after William Gordon, who moved to the Napa County area in 1890.

John Wolfskill, for whom Wolfskill Avenue may be named, was one of the first "white" settlers of Solano County, according to 1912 history of Solano and Napa counties.

He settled along Putah Creek in 1842, eight years before California joined the United States. Mathias Wolfskill, meanwhile, settled in the area in 1850.

Chadbourne said that a story about Mathias Wolfskill circulated the University of California-Davis when he was an agriculture student there. The story was that Mathias Wolfskill had an odd-shaped land grant because he first surveyed the area on horseback and only took land where the wild oats reached his stirrups.

Looking in a brochure called Pioneer Collections of Solano County (by Suisun Valley resident Mary Higham), he said that this Wolfskill had the Rio Los Putos land grant. It spanned Solano and Yolo counties, with 8,880 acres in Solano County alone.

Streets in the old Monte Vista and Piedmont subdivisions of Fairfield were named around 1964 for early settlers. Alford Drive is named after Landy Alford, who came across the plains with Nathan Barbour in 1846.

Barbour, who married Alford's daughter Nancy, has Barbour Drive named after him in the subdivision, too.

Alford is the donor of the Rockville stone chapel site.

Owens Street in the subdivision is reportedly named for an early publisher of the Solano Republican.

Chadbourne said that Great Jones Street, in the older part of Fairfield, was not named for a man but instead for the street where Robert Waterman's old girlfriend lived in Connecticut, according to an account by David Weir.

In that account, Chadbourne said, Mrs. Waterman was so disgruntled with that designation that Waterman (who laid out Fairfield's streets) changed the name of his nearby city "Bridgeport" to Cordelia, after her first name.

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School District open to name suggestions for new high school

By Barry Eberling

DAILY REPUBLIC

FAIRFIELD - Fairfield-Suisun residents have had only three chances in the area's history to name a comprehensive high school.

Until now.

The Fairfield-Suisun School District is building a high school near Cordelia Villages. This new school will join the district's Armijo and Fairfield high schools and Travis School District's Vanden High School.

School Board members have appointed a seven-person naming committee. Members are former board members Nancy Rossi and David Marianno, Willard Sams, Herman Wilson, Gene Muzzio, Don Lowrie and Lori Day.

Anyone can suggest a name for the school. They should submit their choice and supporting material to General Services Director Tom Chalk at district headquarters, 1975 Pennsylvania Ave., Fairfield, 94533. They can also call him at 421-4072.

The naming committee will recommend three names to the School Board, which will have the final say.

One suggestion has already come in. The Armijo Alumni Association likes "Ed Hopkins High School." The late Hopkins coached multiple sports at Armijo from 1940 to 1975.

Or how about "Solano High School?" Fairfield High School came close to getting that name when construction started back in 1963.

The name game generated some disagreement back then, the last time that Fairfield residents got to name a high school.

A naming committee met on Oct. 13, 1963, in the Armijo library to sift through about 30 suggestions. It looked at "Fairfield," "Suisun Valley," "Valley," "Edwin Markham," "Chief Solano" and "Rex Clift." It chose "Solano." But the Armijo Joint Union High School District trustees rejected that name. It would cause confusion with a similarly named junior high school in Vallejo, they reasoned.

So the committee went back to the drawing board. The Fairfield City Council lobbied for the name "Fairfield."

The committee settled on "Fairfield." Student body spokesman Steve Rearden cast the lone "no" vote and said 2,000 students opposed the choice.

"'Fairfield' is a good name for a town, but we want to have a distinguished name," he said.

He wanted "Paul Revere" - distinguished, but uncommon in the area.

The Armijo trustees ratified "Fairfield" and that ended the matter. Almost. John F. Kennedy was assassinated a few days later and a local elementary school student wrote to the City Council urging the school be named for Kennedy. Fairfield and Armijo high schools later became part of the Fairfield-Suisun School District, which formed in 1968.

Also in 1963, the Travis School District began work on its high school.

Travis trustees thought they were building Center High School. But another California high school under construction had the same name. That caused confusion with the mail.

So, in Dec. 1963, the Travis trustees chose ``Vanden" after a community that had been planned for the area, but never built.

Fairfield and Suisun City residents named their first high school in 1891. The two towns had a few hundred residents combined.

People decided on ``Armijo," after Don Jose Francisco Armijo. The aristocratic Armijo came to California from Mexico in 1839 and held a large land grant in what became Solano County. He died in 1849.

But who chose the name and why is missing from the pages of the Solano Republican newspaper.

For several issues, Republican talked about the unnamed ``Public High School." In its Oct. 16, 1891, edition, it suddenly mentioned ``Armijo." The school opened that month in a single room above the Crystal Grammar School.

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Name school

after Waterman

The Fairfield-Suisun School Board is soliciting names for the new high school that is being built north of Cordelia Villages. The Board has established a tradition of naming our schools after local people who have made a contribution to our area.

I've asked several local historians for suggestions for a name for the high school, and they have come up with the perfect name: Cordelia Waterman High School.

Cordelia Waterman was a pioneer woman, the wife of Fairfield founder Robert Waterman. He named the Cordelia area west of Fairfield for her. It's remarkable how few things have been named after the Waterman family, considering the crucial role they played in local history.

Although the City of Fairfield bears his stamp since he named it after a city in Connecticut, only a single, measly road is named for this key historical figure. We owe the fact that the county seat is here, rather than in Benicia or Vallejo, to Waterman.

Although less celebrated than her husband, Cordelia Waterman's role in early Solano County history might have been just as important.

Books have always underplayed the critical role that pioneer women played in American history. Trailblazers, trappers, and frontiersman would be the first Europeans to arrive in an area, but their impact always proved to be transient. It wasn't until the women arrived that a true community was formed, and a society was established. When the men arrived, saloons were built. When the women arrived, they demanded schools, churches, and courtrooms. This is a key element of American history that I've often seen overlooked.

Women didn't serve as generals in famous battles. They didn't serve in Congress, or even vote. But they were the key factor that forged the country. Women turned a gold rush of greedy rogues into a state civilized enough to be admitted into the union.

Also, naming a high school after a nice person would be a nice change. Solano County has a tradition of naming things after rogues and scoundrels, and our record on naming high schools is no different.

Sem Yeto is named after ``Chief" Francisco Solano. I wrote a few weeks ago about Solano's poor human rights record as the commander of Vallejo's Native American forces.

There are accounts of Solano brutally murdering innocents during raids on Indian camps, and good evidence that he kidnapped children to sell them into slavery.

Antonio Armijo had a similar history of abuses during raids on Native American camps. In July 1847, Antonio and two partners raided an Indian camp in the Central Valley, and ``killed a dozen Indians in capturing some forty for laborers." Authorities arrested Antonio in August 1847, and he went to trial on charges of murder and kidnapping. John Sutter and Mariano Vallejo served as judges, and a jury in Sonoma acquitted Armijo and his partners. Fairfield officials named Armijo High after the family in 1891.

I've been assured by historian Leslie Batson that there are no skeletons in the closet of Cordelia Waterman.

I should confess that I prefer geographic names for public buildings. If it were up to me, I would name the high school

after a local place name.

How about Suisun High? That name would honor the native Americans who once lived here, and since it is their word for "west wind," it would represent the most obvious characteristic of this area. This choice might make Suisun City officials happy, since they would finally gain their own high school, even if it's in name rather than location.

The name Green Valley High also might have merit. That's what they called this area before the construction of Interstate 80 artificially split it in half. I also like the name Cordelia Hills High School.

The drawback to any of these names is that they do not follow the "name schools after local people" tradition. So, I would like to submit the name Cordelia Waterman High.

There is an elegance to this suggestion. If we formally name the school Cordelia Waterman, but affectionately refer to it as Cordelia High, it honors a key historic figure and at the same time represents the geographic area.

This suggestion incorporates the school board's tradition of naming after a person, and it gives the school the place name.

It unites the old town of Cordelia, and Cordelia Villages, and the new Cordelia developments. It bears the stamp of a historical heavyweight, yet it honors a representative of pioneer women.

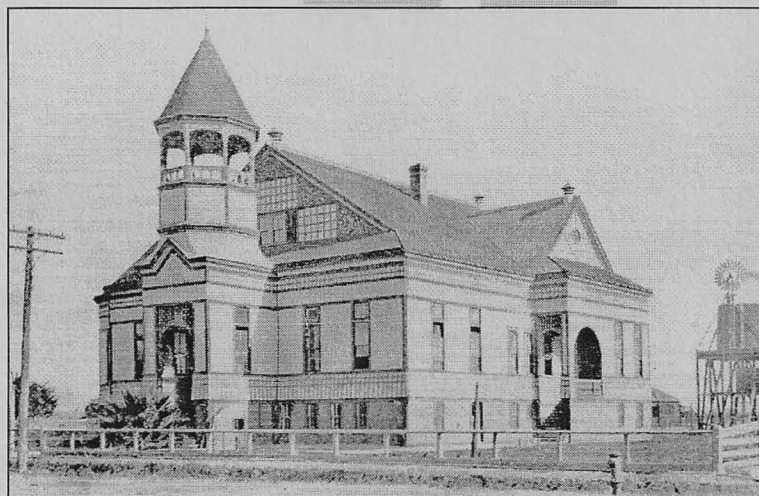
Cordelia Waterman High. It's the perfect name for the new high school.

Jim DeKloe, who teaches biology at Solano Community College, lives in Fairfield. jimdekloe@aol.com

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MOMENTS IN HISTORY

Places



Armijo High School 1893 - 1929. Destroyed by fire. Photo courtesy of Vacaville Heritage Council



Ah, those were the days

Texas street has always been the heart of the city

By Barry Eberling
of the Daily Republic

FAIRFIELD — Back in the beginning of Fairfield, Texas Street was just a humble dirt road through the downtown with some stores and the county offices.

There was no North Texas Street stretching beyond downtown in the mid-1800s. That route existed, but was on the outskirts of Fairfield and was a thoroughfare for people traveling through the county on horseback or by foot.

People on Texas Street could browse at the general merchandise store. But if they really wanted to go on a shopping spree, they'd walk on the wooden boardwalk across the wetlands to the bigger, more successful waterfront town of Suisun City.

Things really began to change for Texas Street and for Fairfield in about 1914, when automobiles had become popular and the state was building its highway system.

State workers came to the area with their mule teams and equipment to build the highway. They used the Texas Street route for the local leg of Highway 40 linking the Bay

Texas Street's beginnings

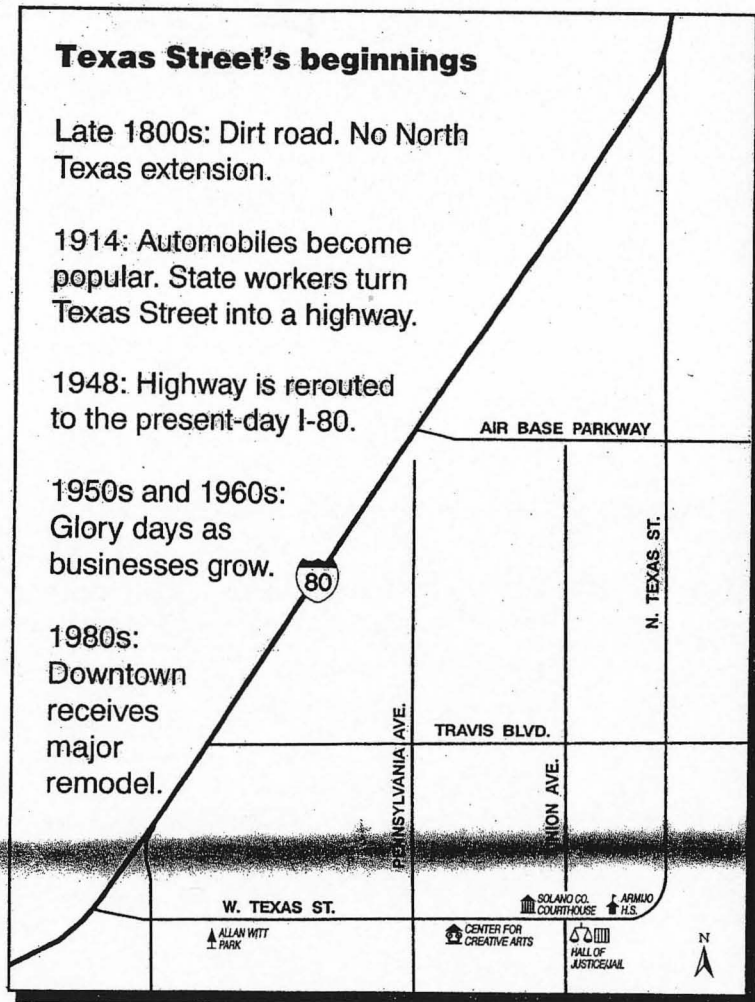
Late 1800s: Dirt road. No North Texas extension.

1914: Automobiles become popular. State workers turn Texas Street into a highway.

1948: Highway is rerouted to the present-day I-80.

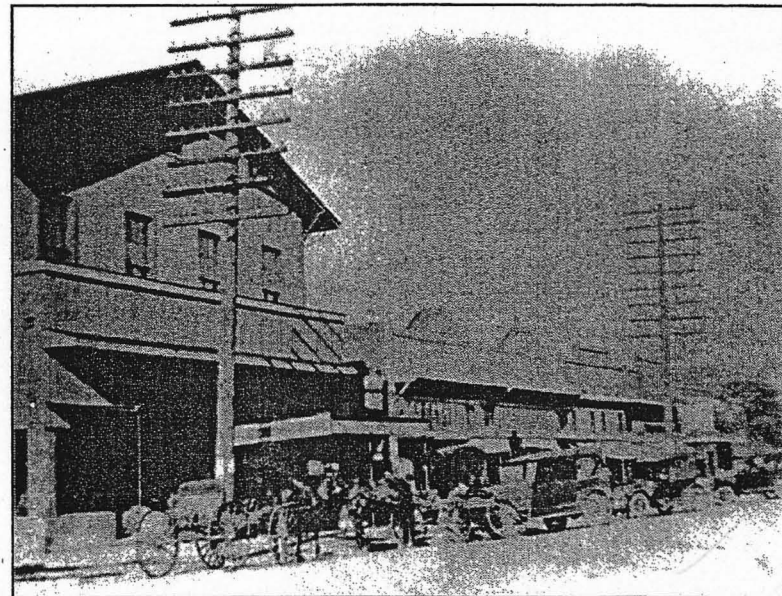
1950s and 1960s: Glory days as businesses grow.

1980s: Downtown receives major remodel.



Daily Republic graphic/KIM DURBIN

In the early part of the century, Texas Street was Highway 40.



Courtesy photo/FAIRFIELD-SUISUN LIBRARY

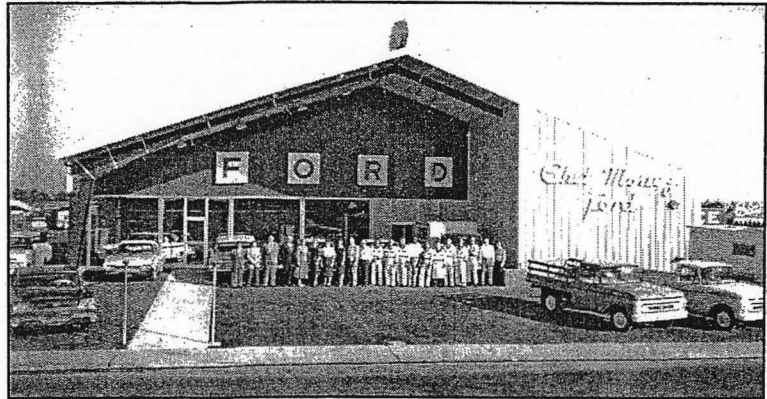
Texas Street, circa 1915. A new highway helped Fairfield grow.

On Sept. 4, 1948, drivers from the Bay Area traveled through Texas Street to the state fair in Sacramento. Traffic was bumper-to-bumper and motorists reported it took two hours to make the journey between Fairfield and Vallejo.

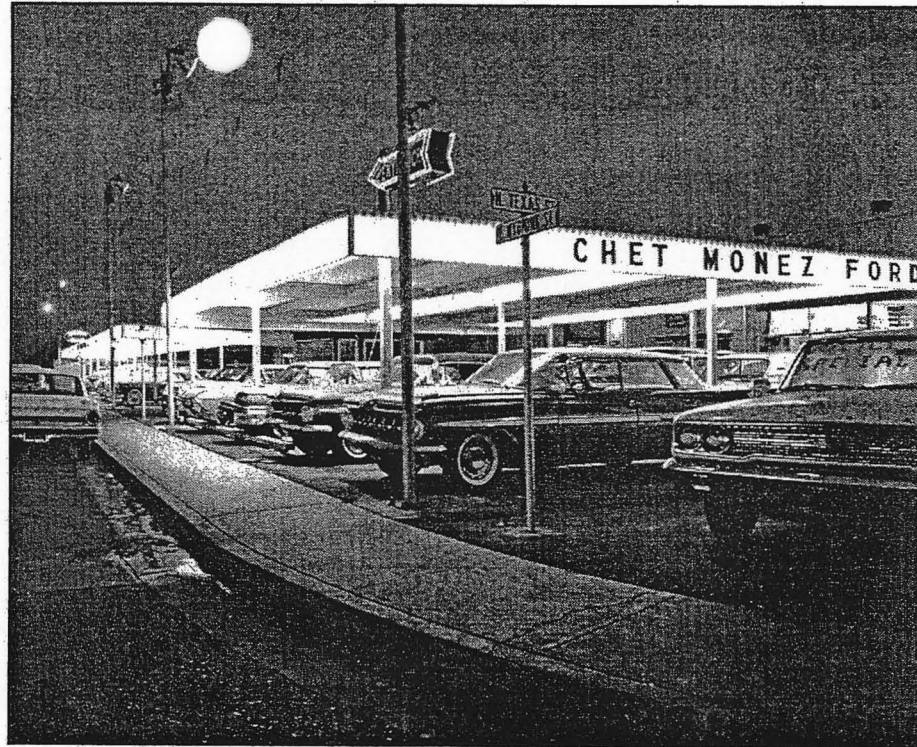
Please see Texas, Page 3



Courtesy photo



Courtesy photo



Courtesy photo

Left: Old cars at Chet Monez Ford in 1962 are on display at the corner of North Texas and Wyoming streets. Left: The interior of Wilson Motors Co. in 1952, at the corner of Texas and Webster streets. Bottom left: Employees of Chet Monez Ford line up for its grand opening on Nov. 23, 1961. The dealership bought out Wilson's Motors at West Texas and Webster streets and moved it to 1350 N. Texas St.



Courtesy photos/DOWNTOWN IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT
Texas Street bustled with business.



Courtesy photo/FAIRFIELD-SUISUN LIBRARY

First Armijo Union High School on Union Avenue in 1893.

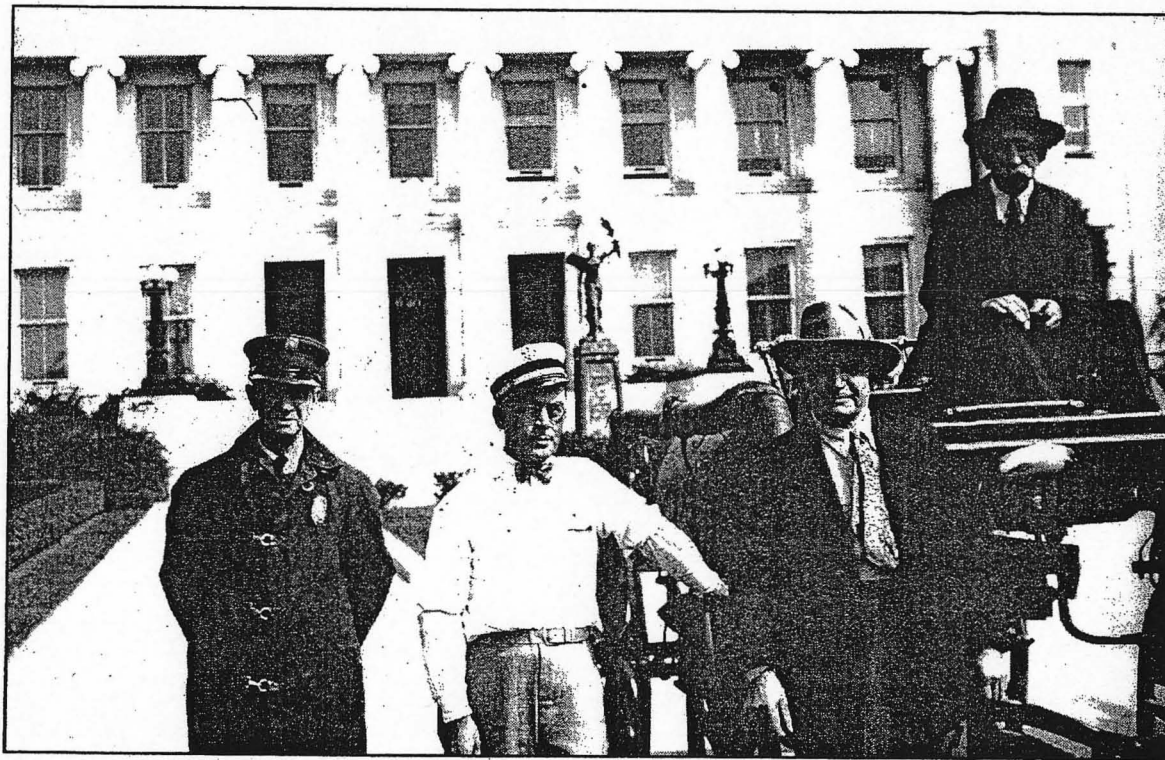
"I remember when . . . Fairfield began at Pennsylvania Avenue and ended at Washington Street. The Fairfield volunteer Fire Department is shown in front of the courthouse and jail. The year was 1932."

— Barbara J. Braker, Fairfield.



Courtesy photos/BARBARA BRAKER

Above: The volunteer Fire Department in 1932. **Right:** Firefighters John H. Braker, grandfather of Bill Braker; Joe Gerevas and John Huck, grandfather of Mae Huck Wolfskill in front of the Solano County Courthouse in 1932. (Fourth man, at far right, is unidentified.)





Electric power poles dominated Texas Street in 1909, as did the horse and buggy. It wasn't until a 1914 highway project got under way that automobiles began to outnumber the horses.

Texas Street, Fairfield, Cal

2763

Courtesy photo/FAIRFIELD/SUISUN LIBRARY

Texas From Page 2

Area and Sacramento, guaranteeing a bright future for Fairfield.

In the process of building a highway that would profoundly change the area's history, one of the contractors drove his mule so hard he ran afoul of the local Humane Society.

Having Texas Street being part of Highway 40 had its advantages. Long-time resident Guido Colla can remember truckers stopping at a cafe on the street in the late 1930s and letting him take fruit from the trucks.

"I can remember particularly peaches from the Marysville area," Colla said.

But having a highway in the middle of town caused problems as well. By 1948, 14,600 cars streamed through downtown Fairfield daily.

A particularly bad day to be on downtown Texas Street was Sept. 4, 1948, when drivers from the Bay Area traveled to and from the state fair in Sacramento. Traffic was bumper-to-bumper and motorists reported it took two hours to make the journey between Fairfield and Vallejo.

The Rev. Porter Knudson tried to drive through a gap in this traffic on Texas Street to go across town and was hit by a Greyhound bus. He suffered no serious injuries.

The solution was already at hand — the state in 1948 was planning to spend \$6 million on improving Highway 40 in Solano County. Among its projects was to build a Fairfield bypass, rerouting Highway 40 to the present-day Interstate 80 route.

"I do remember some controversy," Colla said.

No highway traffic would mean fewer potential customers for businesses.

Fairfield decided to pay a sign company \$80 per month in 1949 for billboard-sized directional signs along the new highway, but later scrapped the plan.

There was no need for the jitters. Texas Street thrived, with businesses replacing pastureland on North Texas Street during the late 1950s and early 1960s. Shoppers could go to the Wonder World department store, eat at Sara's pancakes

and buy a car at Showalter's Rambler.

Former Fairfield Mayor Gary Falati a few months ago walked through the rubble of the Wonder World building, which had just been demolished by a wrecking crew, and recalled the store's heyday.

"This represented what the mall is today," Falati said.

The 1960s were glory days for Texas Street, when commerce flowed easily. These days, merchants on the street are figuring out new ways to capture sales dollars as they compete with Solano Mall and such big-box stores as Wal-Mart.

Downtown got a facelift a few years ago, with brick sidewalks, old-style street lights and other features. Now the city is looking at forming a redevelopment district for North Texas Street to make certain that area thrives for years to come.

Despite the changes during the past century, Texas Street remains the spine of the city and one of its most-traveled routes.

Courthouse Square Has Seen Much Development in Fairfield Since 1860

By WOOD YOUNG

Shortly after the famous Tape-worm Ticket episode in Vallejo, that city made a determined effort to move the county seat there.

In an election Nov. 26, 1873, Vallejo was apparently winner—2,277 to 1,934 for Fairfield. Fraud was immediately alleged. The press in Suisun stated that in three Vallejo precincts, 395 deceased citizens voted, 40 voted at least twice, and 22 up-county names appeared. The hassle reached the legislature. Governor Newton Booth signed a bill on April 2, 1874, retaining Fairfield as county seat.

The next building development came with a connecting two story addition, between the Courthouse and the Hall of Records, which eliminated the former iron bridge between them, but it did not provide a direct stairway between the first and second floors of the Hall of Records. The employees in the recorder's office were compelled to detour via the street to reach the Clerk's office immediately above.

The May 9, 1887, minutes of the Board of Supervisors show John Calvert awarded the \$540 contract to construct the new addition, with J. M. Curtis named as architect.

On Aug. 3 of that year the board found the addition not complete or satisfactory. With contractor Calvert assenting, deductions were made to defray the expense of completion, and \$4540 ordered paid, plus \$307 for extra work by the contractor. The addition was then accepted by the board.

Twenty years later the growth of the population and resultant county business forced a momentous decision—the outmoded and inadequate jail and courthouse had to be replaced. And the jail had to be first.

On Sept. 4, 1906, the supervisors awarded W. M. Concannon a contract for a new county jail building for \$35,136. At the same meeting the Pauley Jail Co. was awarded a variable contract for steel cell construction in amount of \$34,972. On Nov. 11 specifica-

tions were changed to a reinforced concrete building, instead of a steel frame and concrete block structure. W. M. Concannon was allowed \$10,984 for that change in his contract.

The new county jail building was accepted by the Supervisors Jan. 8, 1908. The following July 6 the installation of the steel cells by Pauley Co. was completed and the jail accepted. However on May 3 of the next year, Concannon was awarded a \$5,774 contract for a jail kitchen and laundry.

In preparation for a new Courthouse a bond election was called for \$250,000 at 5 per cent interest. The election carried and on June 20, 1910, the supervisors accepted the low bid of Thompson & Starret Co. for \$209,000 to construct a new courthouse. It was specified that Raymond granite be used for facing the concrete building.

Fifteen days later the contract was signed with that firm and \$7281 additional allowed for improvements that were not in the specifications. E. C. Hemmings and W. A. Jones were named as architects.

Construction of the new courthouse was started immediately north of the old one, so close that the office furniture was moved across on ramps between the two buildings when that time arrived. The demolition of the old building was then made.

The Dec. 4, 1911, minutes of the supervisors accepted the new courthouse as complete, and that action was dated back to Nov. 1. The board acknowledged it had failed to make a formal accept-

ance at its last meeting and the courthouse had actually been used for public business for over a month.

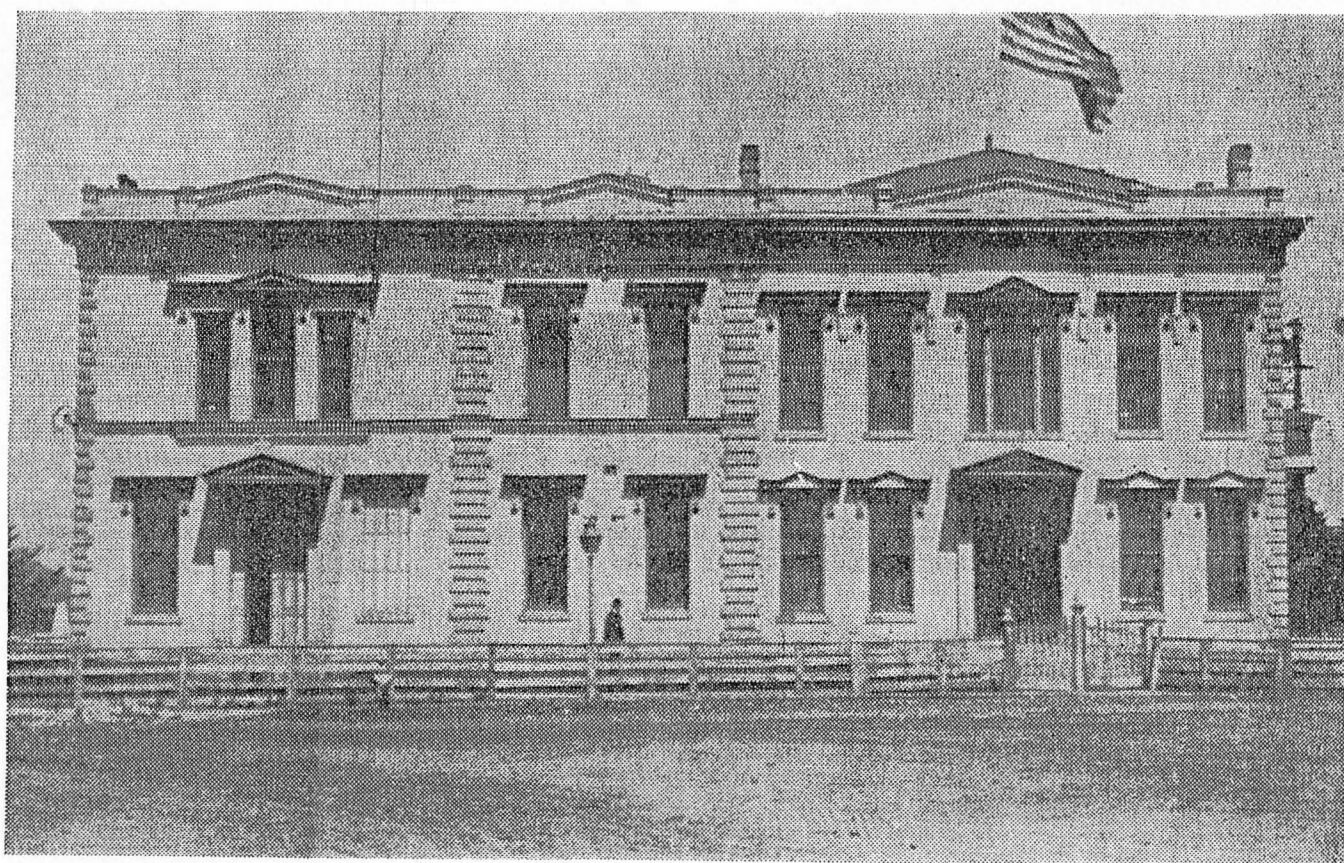
By 1948 the need for more office space resulted in a new annex to the courthouse, just 80 feet west, but this time not joined to it by a steel bridge.

The Nov. 1, 1948, supervisors' minutes show seven bids submitted for construction of a new office building at the county seat, on a portion of the original Waterman 16 acre grant. Accepted as the lowest bid was that of B & R Construction Co. for \$269,447. Harry E. Devine was named as architect. Financing was secured by direct taxation and not by sale of bonds.

Eight months later, on June 20, 1950, the Board of Supervisors, on recommendation of their architect, Harry Devine, accepted the new courthouse annex as completed.

Other auxiliary buildings at the County seat such as the County Hospital and County Library, were of course erected over the span of years and not mentioned in this summary. After a centennial plus 10 years, the County seat seems firmly established in Fairfield—and again in need of more office space.

The Daily Republic

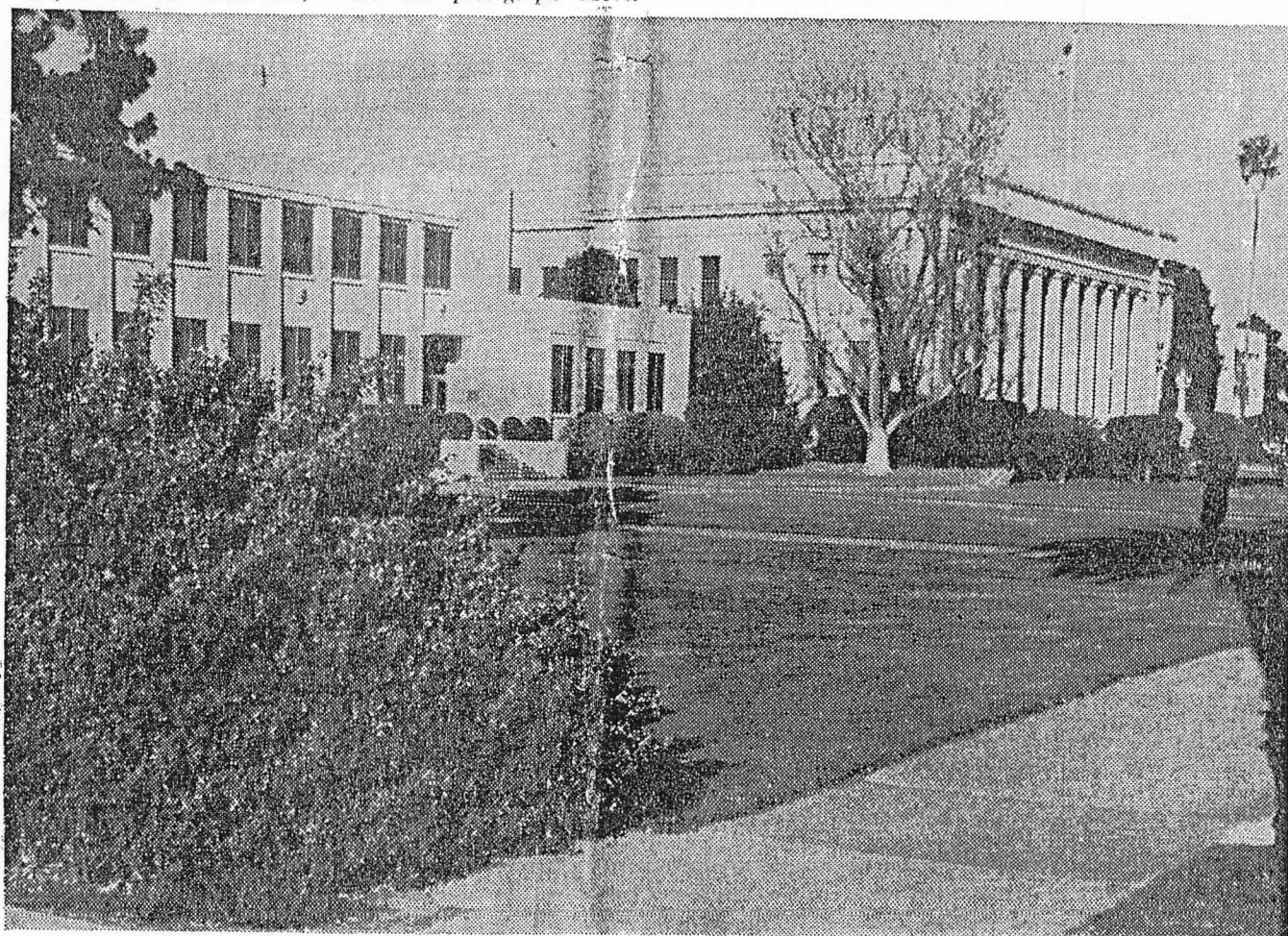


THE 1887 ADDITION that joined the Hall of Records, left, to the old Courthouse,

right, is seen directly behind the pedestrian at center in the old photograph above.

The citizens of Fairfield soon petitioned the supervisors to

remove the wooden fence in front of the courthouse.



STRONG CONTRAST to the first Solano County Courthouse is the complex that now stands in downtown Fairfield. Seen here from the

west, the trim courthouse is still as distinctive as when it was constructed in 1911. The 10 Grecian columns that grace the building's front,

The brick rubble from the 1860 Courthouse is buried beneath the concrete approach to the front of the newer building. To the left of the

Courthouse is the two-story annex that was constructed in 1950. On the right is the county jail.

—DR Photo by Balmer

A historical look at the emergence of modern Fairfield

(Editor's note: This is the debut of a monthly column by B. Gale Wilson, in which he will offer his perspective on city government. Wilson has been Fairfield's city manager for three decades, longer than any city manager has served any California city. This column will appear the first Sunday of each month.)

By B. Gale Wilson

Special to the Daily Republic

Fairfield was a small town when I was hired by the City Council to become the second city manager in its history in March 1956. At that time I was the youngest city manager in the state and one of the youngest in the country. Some early impressions after a few months in office were:

1. The community was almost totally dependent on Travis Air Force Base. There was no other local industry. The town's few businesses were located on Texas Street downtown. The town didn't even have a bowling alley.

2. Fast-food restaurants were few and far between. Not even a McDonald's or Burger King! There were plenty of service stations. My view is every town should have at least one of each.

3. Travis Boulevard, from the highway to Pennsylvania Avenue south of the present Solano Mall, was literally an unpaved street. A few brave motorists would try it anyway in the wintertime. Gary Falati wasn't old enough to drive so we didn't have to worry about him.

Sometimes we had to send city tractors out to pull cars out of the mud. Sometimes private citizens like Falati's uncle, John Lambrecht, who used to run "Lambrecht's Feed Store," would drive the "good Samaritan" tractor.

4. Highway 40 (since renamed Interstate 80) had recently been moved off Texas Street, to its present alignment, but there were frequent stoplights along

the highway, including one at West Texas Street. Since Travis Boulevard was a dirt road, a light wasn't needed there.

5. Downtown merchants had predicted that when the state moved the highway out of town, Fairfield would dry up and blow away. Others said new growth would offset the loss. New growth won out over the Fairfield summer wind.

6. Armijo High School occupied the building on Union Avenue where the county Justice Building now stands. There was talk and planning for a new modern Armijo campus east of Washington Street.

7. Suisun probably had a bigger commercial district than Fairfield. There were two or three multistory hotels in downtown Suisun.

Suisun had historically been the commercial center of upper Solano County. Fairfield was the "young upstart" brave enough to approve new subdivisions. Eventually there might be sufficient business to effectively compete with the central business core of Suisun City.

8. In the center of Fairfield where the Civic Center now stands were about 25 acres of low-income temporary housing units built by the federal government. The project was known as "Waterman Park." Original occupants were folks connected with the military at Travis.

Through the leadership of Mayor Ellis Godfrey, the city had acquired the 314 units for \$27,000, most of it borrowed until rents came in.

It was run as a city department. Rental rates for a studio apartment were \$30 a month and a three-bedroom went for \$45.

Incidentally, profits from these "high" rental rates provided the first million dollars that went into the Fairfield Civic Center. We saved up for at least 10 years to do something of which the community would be proud.

9. In those days Allan Witt wasn't a park, he was a young, active, vigorous

member of the Fairfield City Council. He is still not a park, he runs a barber shop on Texas Street.

Most newcomers don't know that. They would do well to drop in and visit with Allan. His head is full of history about Fairfield and Suisun. He even remembers when the two cities were connected by a boardwalk over the swamp and across the railroad tracks.

Allan Witt left public office after 24 years as a councilman and mayor (1948-1972). Later he was honored by having a community park on West Texas Street named after him.

10. Manuel Campos was a young aspiring businessman introduced into politics by council members Ellis Godfrey, Allan Witt, Chris Santaella, Glenn Richardson and Bud Huck. They talked him into accepting an appointment to the Planning Commission.

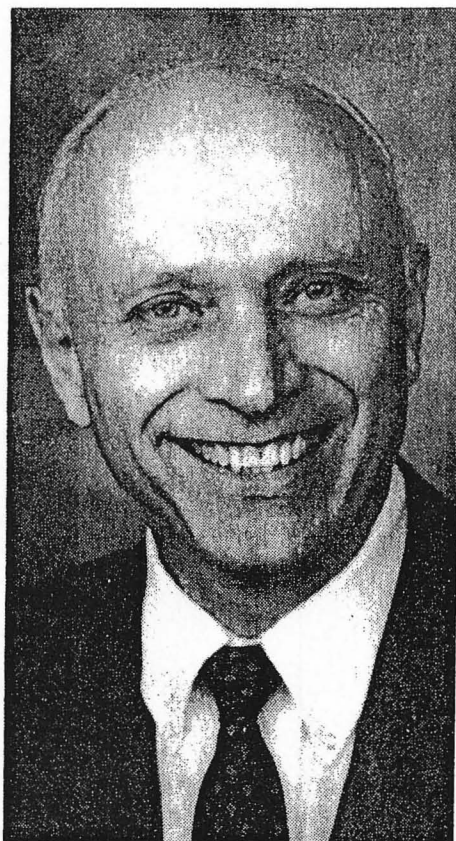
He later served on the City Council and as mayor. He hasn't been able to get politics out of his system to this date.

11. Tom Hannigan wasn't old enough to run for public office, but I think he developed a nose for politics by hanging around Manuel Campos when Tom was a young kid buying candy bars on his frequent visits to Manuel's grocery store.

12. Fairfield's water system had been run by pioneers Ray Venning and his wife, Edith, since 1929. Ray took care of the pumps, wells and pipelines. Edith did the water billing and accounting from her kitchen table.

Edith Venning still vividly remembers those early days of the Fairfield water system. Recently when asked, "How could you, do it all from your kitchen table?" she chuckled and said, "It was a problem on wash day. But on other days it wasn't too bad. We only had 300 meters and my husband knew every family personally."

We now have 16,000 accounts processed by modern computers. We add about 300



B. GALE WILSON
City manager since '56

new water accounts every four months. We admit but regret we have lost some of the Ray and Edith Venning personal touch.

But, may I pause to inquire how many of you readers would be enjoying the good life in Fairfield, Calif., today if we had stopped at 300 water meters? Which one of you who have arrived after the 300th water meter was installed would care to surrender your water meter for the sake of maintaining the status quo?

After reading the above, you tell me if you think Fairfield has changed since the

'50s. Some of the change has been good — Solano Mall, more jobs, industry and opportunity. Yet some of the change has been upsetting to many people because the city has lost some of that small-town "feel."

It has been said "we rub elbows with many, but touch hearts with few." As the city gets bigger, we rarely have an opportunity to even rub elbows anymore. Newcomers lack the knowledge of the community and its roots to feel connected to the past.

Maybe one of the reasons people do not feel closely identified with the city is that Fairfield is no longer one Fairfield.

I suspect it means one thing to the person who leaves his home in Cordelia at 5:45 a.m. to commute to a job in San Francisco and something very different to a retired military man and his family.

Because Fairfield has become more urban in recent years, particularly with the addition of Solano Mall, our small-town character is being lost. I feel very strongly that we need to replace that loss with a new sense of "community."

I hope this column can become one, small focus in unifying the community. In the future, I plan to discuss city activities and initiatives and give you a better idea of where the city has been and the direction in which it is going.

I would appreciate, in return, letters from the public of interest or concern to you. As space allows I'll attempt to respond.

To get this two-way communication process going, I'd like to invite you to submit a name for this column. Please mail the entries to me at 1000 Webster St., Fairfield, Calif. 94533, by Feb. 10. The "prize" for the winner will be lunch for two with the Fairfield city manager and your chance to personally tell me what you would like the city to do and become in the next 30 years.



Captain Boynton was supposed to have built this house at 885 Beck Ave. It's present owners could not even give it away and will destroy it.

Daily Republic/GARY GOLDSMITH

House falling to time

By Gina Cioffi

Daily Republic Business Editor

FAIRFIELD — No takers.

After months of advertising in local newspapers in search of a new owner for the old two-story house at 885 Beck Ave., that's what owners Kirk Wampler and Bill Saks wound up with.

Their ads offering the dilapidated turn-of-the-century house to anyone with the cash to move it attracted a few responses.

But in the end, no one could come up with the money to move the rickety old house, which is believed to be built by Captain Boynton and was home to Charles A. Gein and his family from the early 1900s to the 1950s.

So the old house will be destroyed this week. Moving it likely would have cost a lot of money, Wampler said.

Years of inadequate maintenance left the wooden structure, which featured now-weathered Greek and Gothic Revival architecture, riddled with dry rot.

It wasn't clear whether the house would have survived the trauma of being jacked off its foundation and carted to a new site, Wampler said.

The building is tall and narrow, so moving it on public streets strung with utility lines also would have been difficult and expensive, he added.

"It was not well kept up," Wampler said. "It's pretty incredible inside."

Indeed it is.

The fireplace mantel was replaced some time ago after the original was ripped out and taken away. The new mantel resembles a thin slab of Formica laminated plastic.

One ceiling sports an apparently hand-painted rendering of astrological star groupings that looks like something from Berkeley in the '60s.

The tall, narrow, curving stairway creaks, the living room walls and door jams are scrawled with telephone numbers written in pencil and ball-point pen, another ceiling is plastered with auto products posters, and a chipped concrete stairway leads down to a dark, dungeon-like basement.

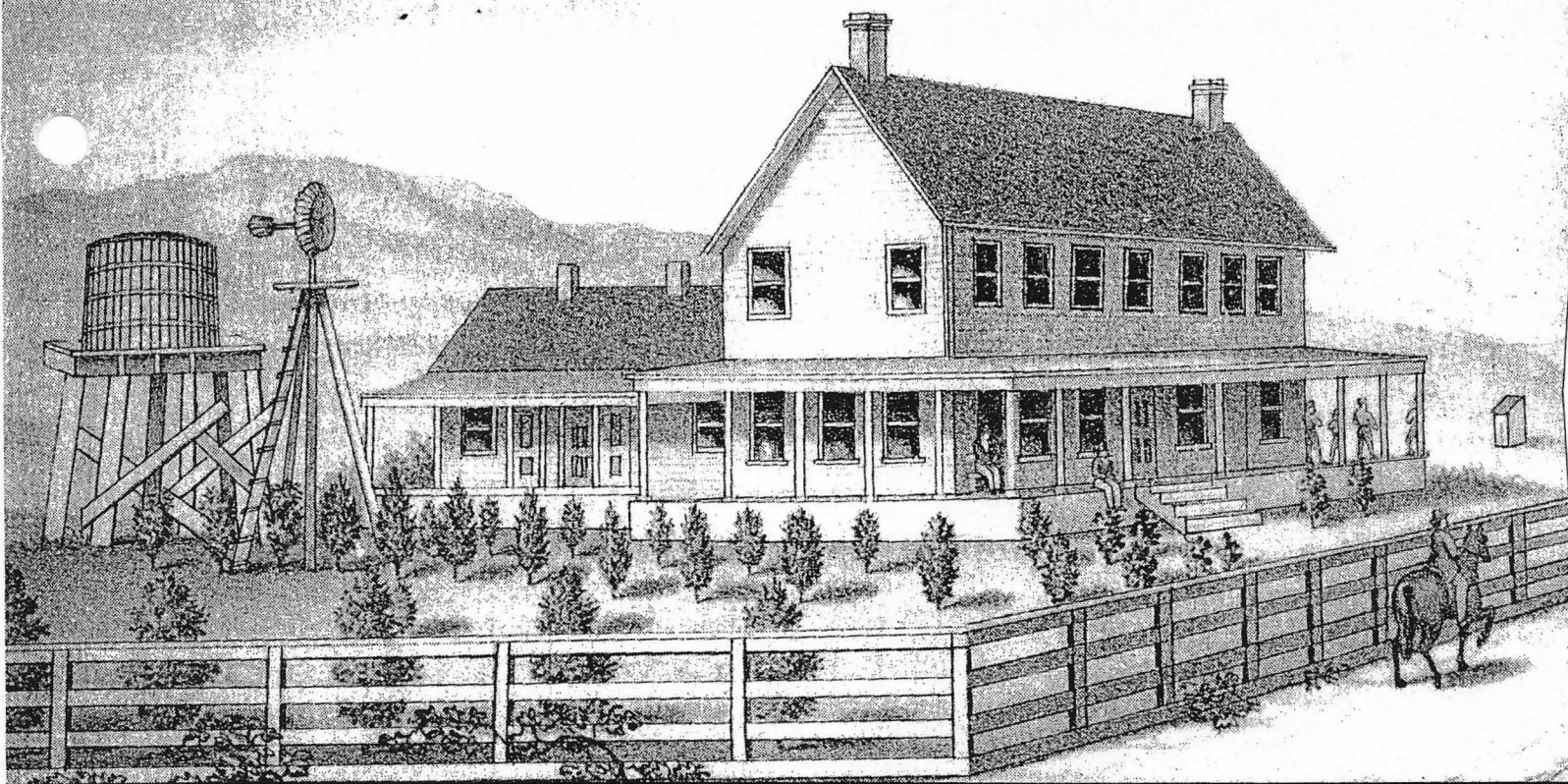
After a stroll around the interior, it's hard to believe that someone actually lived there until a few months ago. But someone did. However, Maxine Meyer, the most recent resident of the old house, has moved out and gone to live with her son in the Bay Area.

But even as the house falls, something from the old days will remain: three old trees — an oak, a bay and a pine — are being saved, Wampler said.

In a few months, these venerable old trees will witness the erection of a modern, three-story glass-and-steel office building where the old house once stood.

Fairfield has no privately or publicly funded ongoing organization equipped to pump money into the preservation of the city's older buildings.

Such efforts depend on an individual willing to assume the potentially massive costs of moving a house and/or renovating it and maintaining it, or on groups of individuals banding together to save a specific structure, much as community members did during the early 1980s in an unsuccessful attempt to raise money to save the old Armijo High School auditorium.



Courtesy Illustration

In 1875 or 1876 Solano County's first hospital was built three miles east of Fairfield. The facility housed a physician's office, drug store, dining room, general sitting room, six small wards and a bath house. The second floor held four large wards.

Tale of county hospital buried along with dead

(Editor's note: This is part of an occasional series of stories about Solano County's history.)

By Ian Thompson

Daily Republic Staff Writer

FAIRFIELD — You never know when a little local history might turn up.

In October, 1965, it almost quite literally did.

Hofmann Construction Co. was preparing to build a subdivision on Tabor Avenue. According to a Daily Republic article, "some old county residents" dropped by to tell the company it was about to build on a forgotten, county-owned indigent cemetery.

The cemetery was left after the demolition of the old Solano County Hospital. The discovery set off a one-month furor over who would move the 206 bodies believed to be buried there in canvas sacks.

When the remains were finally moved, so was the last vestige of upper Solano County's first hospital.

The first county hospital was built either in 1875, according to Marguerite Hunt's 1926 "History

SOLANO HERITAGE

of Solano County," or a year later in 1876, according to the 1878 Thompson and West "Historical Atlas of Solano County."

Before the hospital was built, medical care for indigents was contracted out to local physicians by the Solano County Board of Supervisors on a yearly basis.

Hospital conditions depended upon who won the contract and oversaw whatever facility was designated as that year's hospital. In 1867, the Solano County grand jury stunned the county with a report condemning one facility.

"We have also visited the the place called the Hospital," the jury said in August. "We found on a barren lot a 10-by-12 shanty, unfurnished — unless you call a small pine table and a pine bedstead, with a dirty blanket on

See Hospital, Back of Section

Hospital

From Page One

furniture."

The sole occupant was a former miner from Nova Scotia who was found lying on the Sacramento road—eight miles northeast of Fairfield, a victim of robbery. "We found a deplorable old man, afflicted with palsy, who had been here three months," the jury said.

"And this is the place that the county of Solano keeps her indigent sick!" the outraged jury said.

The jury condemned the contract system. It said contractors were apt to cut costs as much as possible. "Consequently, the sick and afflicted are apt to be sufferers," the jury wrote.

The county didn't change the contract system but seems to have improved the hospital conditions. The following year, the 1868 grand jury report stated only that they found the hospital in "the proper condition."

In 1870, Suisun City physician James Pressley and druggist S.D. Campbell were awarded the contract for "the sum of \$2,000 in gold coin of the United States of America."

One year later, Pressley and Campbell demanded \$3,580 to renew the contract. They said needed the increase to meet rising medicinal costs and growing patient load.

The two might have gotten it if not for Fairfield resident Angus Williamson. He wrote he could do the job for 95 cents per patient per day. Indigent dead would be buried for \$17 a body.

The supervisors liked Williamson's offer. In August, he got the contract for \$3,000.

Pressley apparently got the contract back a year later. Why is not known, but his name appears in 1873 records that list six

indigent deaths that occurred at the hospital.

In 1875, according to Hunt, the hospital was formally established in rented buildings. That fall, supervisors went one step further and bought 60 acres three miles east of Fairfield from L. Fitch. The property cost \$25 an acre. The "strictly up-to-date" hospital cost \$130,879.

Munro Frazer's "History of Solano County" describes it as a two-story building. The first floor held the physician's office, drug store, dining room, general sitting room, six small wards and a bath house. The second floor held four large wards. An addition was added onto the rear for the cook, steward and storage.

The two physicians on duty at the time were A.T. Spence and W.G. Downing, "both gentlemen well practiced in their profession and much liked in the district."

Supervisors' minutes show they were concerned about the patients' moral well-being as well as physical well-being. In early 1887, they passed an ordinance forbidding card playing at the hospital on Sundays.

Neither Frazer nor Hunt mention a cemetery. Solano County records show that from 1875 to 1920, when the hospital moved to West Texas Street, about 200 people were buried in the 30,000-square-foot burial ground.

Many of the dead were the victims of flu epidemics that occasionally swept the county. These deaths gave rise to the nickname "the pest house" (short for pestilence), according to Vallejo historian Lee Fountain.

Death certificates also listed consumption and general paralysis as causes of death.

The hospital superintendent and cemetery custodian J.H. Hoyt dug many of the graves, as many as seven a week. The last burial was in 1917. The cemetery's last mention in county records was in 1937.

The dead were buried in canvas

sacks. Headstones were not erected, only an occasional wooden marker. Both practices made finding the graves difficult 60 to 70 years later.

Newspaper references to the hospital after the turn of the century called it both "a hospital and an old folks home." A 1920 Solano Republican account described a Christmas celebration with hospital physician Dr. Samuel G. Bransford presiding.

Music teacher Mary Bird provided the music, a Professor Brown of Vallejo played Santa Claus and "Suisun's young ladies distributed nuts, candies and fruit." A tree, gifts and a roast turkey with all the trimmings rounded out the evening.

The hospital was used continuously until 1921 when the county opened its new hospital.

Supervisors spent \$121,477 to build and equip the new hospital. It was completed in July 1920. Hoyt stayed in charge until 1927. Bransford was the head physician until 1939.

The hospital and old folks home was torn down, and the land was sold to William B. O'Conner. According to the Oct. 29, 1965, Times-Herald, little thought was given to preserving the cemetery and it was marked only "by a ramshackle wooden fence and high weeds."

"The fence was erected by the O'Connors and the area was used as a corral for bucks, a part of their flock of sheep," the article said.

As the decades passed, the cemetery was forgotten. That was until Hofmann Construction Co. discovered it while planning to build a subdivision there in October 1965.

The Times-Herald said an earlier records search by Title Guarantee Co. of Solano of the property showed no cemetery.

The specific site, estimated to contain 206 bodies, was located under the land proposed for H.

Glenn Richardson Elementary School, according to a Daily Republic article.

According to the article, Hofmann argued that moving the bodies should be at county expense since it was a county cemetery.

School Superintendent Charles Sullivan was not about to have his students attend school in a cemetery, however, a Nov. 10 Daily Republic article said. Sullivan said if nothing was done to move the bodies, he would move the school site 250 feet west and off the cemetery site.

An agreement was reached in mid-November to move the bodies to what a Nov. 16 Daily Republic article called "the Suisun-Fairfield potter's field," the area's indigent cemetery.

With the removal of the bodies, the last vestige of upper Solano County's oldest county hospital was erased.

The county hospital on West Texas Street continued to operate until 1973. At its closing it had 70 beds, a staff of about 80 people and one to two physicians on duty depending on the time of year, according to Dr. Edward Lopez, then the hospital's director.

It was closed because it was operating at a deficit and had several adverse inspection reports concerning the building, Lopez said.

He said many indigent patients were being taken by other local hospitals under Medicare. It was also the time when the state was closing down many small county hospitals. "We were down to a few individuals," Lopez said.

Lopez said the staff was mainly absorbed by Vallejo General Hospital and Intercommunity Hospital (now North Bay Medical Center). So were the few patients.

Only the primary-care clinic remains in the building that now houses other departments such as the county's juvenile hall and agriculture department.

Solano County's past

Patwin Indians called it home before settlers

FAIRFIELD — Since the days of the Spanish settlers, much of Solano County's identity has resulted from its role as a crossroads.

Located between what later became San Francisco and Sacramento, Solano over the years has been crisscrossed by pack train trails, the first transcontinental railroad and Interstate 80, the major freeway between the Bay Area and the state capital.

Before the settlers and their roads, however, Solano County was the home of the Patwin Indians. Today some of their village place names survive in such local names as Suisun, Ulatia and Putah.

Actually, the name of one of the Patwin chiefs was the inspiration for the county's title. Sem Yeto, later baptized Francisco Solano, was chief of the Suisun tribe (their word for "west winds"), whose rancharia was located near Rockville.

During the days of the Mexican colonization of the North Bay area, Solano became a good friend of Commandante General Mariano Guadalupe Vallejo, who was later to become a member of the first elected legislature of the territory of California.

In February 1850, as the boundaries of the first counties of the new territory were being set by the legislature, Vallejo named the area after his Indian friend.

At that time, the county was divided into just two townships,

Benicia and Suisun. Vallejo and Vacaville followed within two years.

The first American settlers to occupy the Suisun Rancho had been the Daniel Berry family, who lived in Suisun Valley. They and other settlers — many of them disappointed gold seekers — planted wheat and vegetables on the valley lands.

An embarcadero was established near the Suisun Marsh in 1851 and the area soon became a business center. When the first election was held in Suisun Township in November 1852, 156 voters turned out.

The township became an incorporated city with a population of 200 in 1868. A Southern Pacific train depot was added in 1870.

The nearby town which later became the county seat, Fairfield, also originally was part of the Suisun Rancho, purchased from General Vallejo by A.A. Ritchie in 1850. Ritchie in turn sold sea Capt. Robert Waterman an undivided one-third interest.

Twenty-nine months later Ritchie died and Waterman was named attorney-in-fact to dispose of the 17,752-acre rancho.

The town site of Fairfield — named after Waterman's home town in Connecticut — was plotted in 1856. The nearby community of Cordelia was named for his wife.

The captain subsequently promoted the idea of moving the county seat to Fairfield from Benicia. He including in the deal

to the county an offer of 16 acres called Union Square, plus four adjacent blocks to the town of Fairfield and his personal bond of \$10,000, if the movement succeeded.

The election on the issue, held Sept. 18, 1858, produced the following results: 1,029 for Fairfield, 625 for Benicia and 10 for Vallejo. (The residents of the latter city reportedly voted for Fairfield to spite Benicia, which had taken the state capital from them in 1853.)

Shortly after the election, the weekly Solano County Herald relocated from Benicia to Suisun City. It later became the Solano Republican and, in 1961, the Daily Republic.

Although Fairfield was the county seat, Suisun City remained the larger and more active of the two towns for many years. Incorporated in 1903, Fairfield began to catch up when the Army located an air field in 1942 on the windswept plains east of the city.

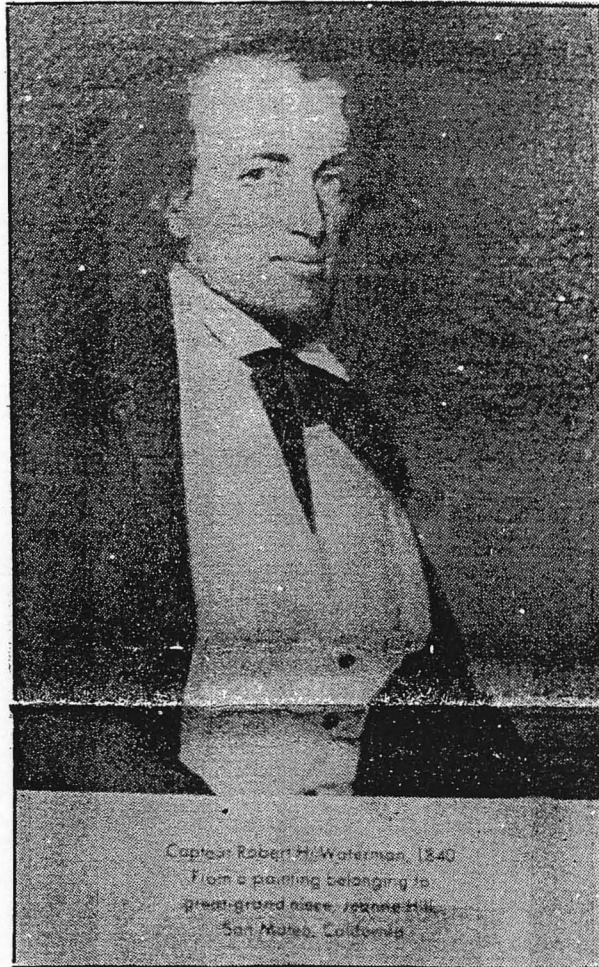
Originally named the Suisun-Fairfield Army Air Field, the base was rechristened Travis Air Force Base in 1951 after Brigadier Gen. Robert F. Travis was killed there in a crash of a B-29. The air base was annexed to Fairfield in 1966.

Today, Solano County has more than 235,203 residents. Fairfield residents number more than 61,000 and Suisun City boasts a population over 11,000.

Although originally an agricultural area, the county now has more than 94 percent of its population living in urban areas.

The bell Fairfield has come to know stands proudly at the community center. Originally part of the Suisun Rancho, Fairfield was purchased from General Vallejo by A.A. Ritchie in 1850. Ritchie in turn sold sea Capt. Robert Waterman an undivided one-third interest. Twenty-nine months later Ritchie died and Waterman was named attorney-in-fact to dispose of the 17,752-acre rancho.






Above, a photographed page from a candidate's ball program held in 1914. Candidates advertisements were interspersed throughout the dance program, hence the two step and moonlight waltz reference. At left, sea Capt. Robert Waterman is pictured in a painting belonging to his great-grand niece. The town site of Fairfield — named after Waterman's home town in Connecticut — was plotted in 1856. The nearby community of Cordelia was named for his wife. Below, workers at the H.A. Bassford Ranch are pictured in 1886 dipping and peeling peaches during the harvest.

The Daily Republic, Fairfield, Calif., Fri., Dec. 31, 1982

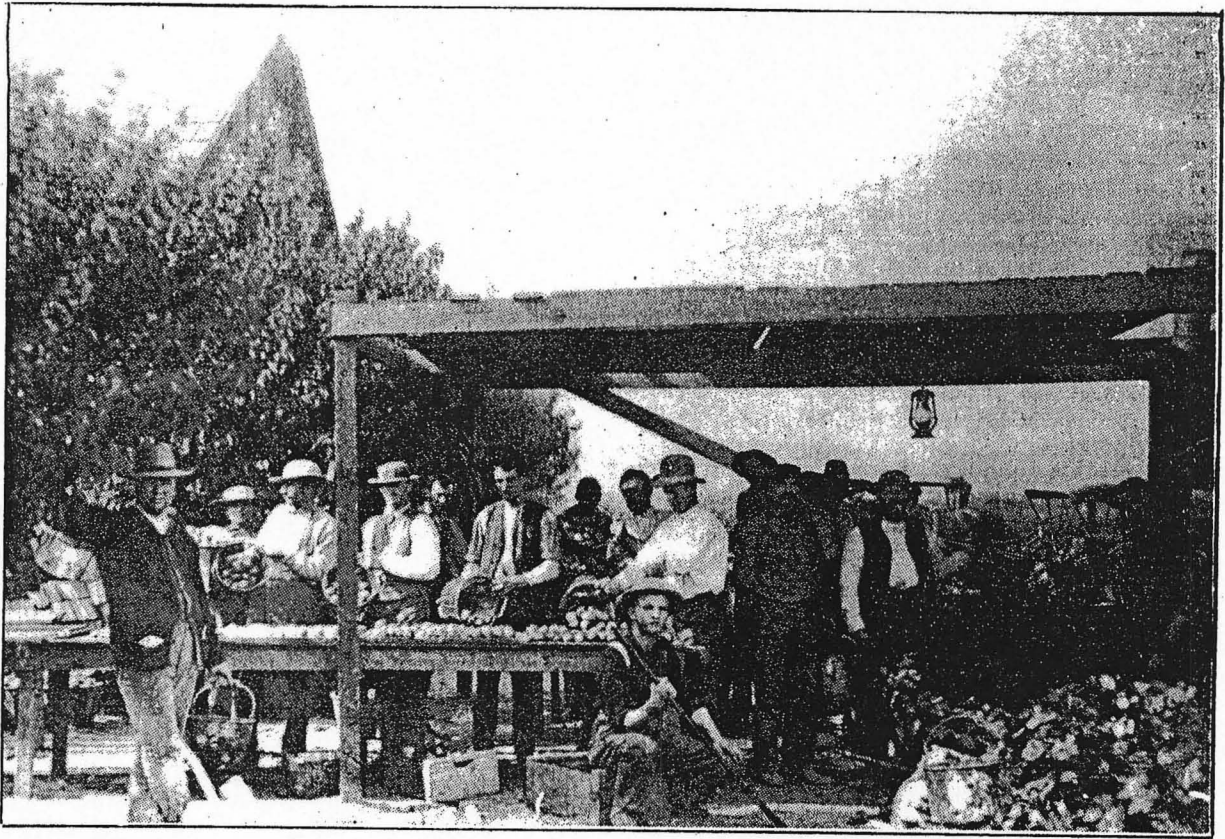
C. P. Stevens
Candidate for
**Judge
of the
Superior
Court**
For Solano County



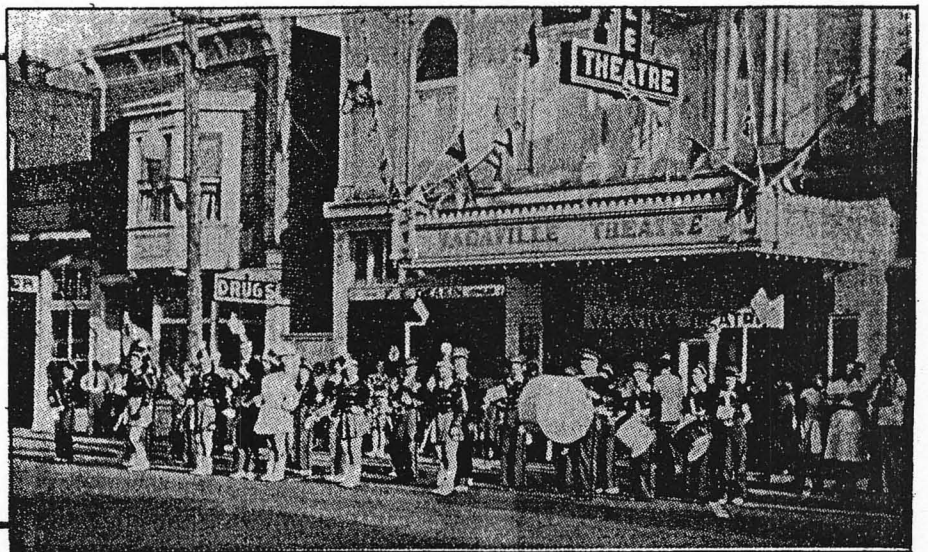
9. Two Step

10. Waltz—Moonlight

W. B. CONNELLY
CANDIDATE FOR
SUPERVISOR
THIRD DISTRICT



As the sign under the marquee states, the band is lining up for a Monster Victory Rally in 1945. The theatre still stands on Main Street in Vacaville and is the center of a heated debate on whether it will become an adult movie theatre.



Towns of Solano County are rich with history

by Rowena Lugtu-Shaddox
of the Daily Republic

FAIRFIELD — Seven cities, numerous towns, some that no longer exist, is what Solano County is about.

Aside from Fairfield, Suisun City and Vacaville, there are several towns rich with history.

OUTLYING COMMUNITIES

■ **Cordelia** — Capt. Robert Waterman founded Cordelia about 1850, before he founded Fairfield.

He named the town after his wife, Cordelia.

It was later moved a short distance, renamed Bridgeport, then renamed Cordelia again.

Today, it is a small rural community with Fairfield on three sides of it and the Suisun Marsh on the other. Thompson's Corner bar is its sole business establishment.

■ **Elmira** — This small town, named after Elmira, New York, owes its existence to the California-Pacific railroad. Vaca Station near the town was a junction for transporting fruit for the fertile Vaca Valley. There is no train depot in Elmira today, but it is a small farming community with a general store.

■ **Dixon** — Before there was Dixon, there was Silveyville a few miles west. But the California Pacific railroad missed Silveyville, and a new town sprung up near the depot.

Residents of Silveyville moved many of their buildings to the new site, where the structures remain today.

The town was named after Thomas Dickson, but the first package of goods arriving at



Daily Republic/MARK PYNES

Mare Island Naval Shipyard, left, and the waterfront of Vallejo are shown in this aerial photo.

the depot was marked for "Dixon" and the misspelling stuck.

Today, Dixon has 12,831 residents and many new subdivisions and businesses.

■ **Benicia** — Gen. Mariano Vallejo helped Dr. Robert Semple found Benicia along Suisun Bay in 1847. In gratitude, Semple named the town "Francisca" after Vallejo's wife.

But when Yerba Buena changed its name to San Francisco, Semple had to come up with something else. He looked at Francisca's full name — Francisca Maria Felipa Benicia Carrillo de Vallejo, and chose Benicia.

Today, Benicia has 27,817 residents and a port, industrial park and oil refinery.

Visitors can see the historic Benicia arsenal where Gen. Ulysses S. Grant was once stationed, and walk along the

Carquinez Strait at the Benicia State Recreation area.

■ **Vallejo** — Gen. Mariano Vallejo battled Indians for the Mexican government, founded Sonoma, befriended Chief Solano and became a state senator.

In 1850, he donated land and money to make Vallejo the state capitol. The Legislature met there on a few occasions, but later moved to Sacramento.

Vallejo wanted to call the town "Eureka," but the legislature settled on his own name.

Vallejo is now Solano County's largest city, with more than 114,689 residents. It has Mare Island Naval Shipyard, which is slated to close next year, the county fairgrounds and Marine World Africa USA.

■ **Rio Vista** — Rio Vista was originally at another loca-

tion, but was moved after flooding in 1862, on the banks of the Sacramento River.

It became a center for salmon fishing and a port for shipping goods.

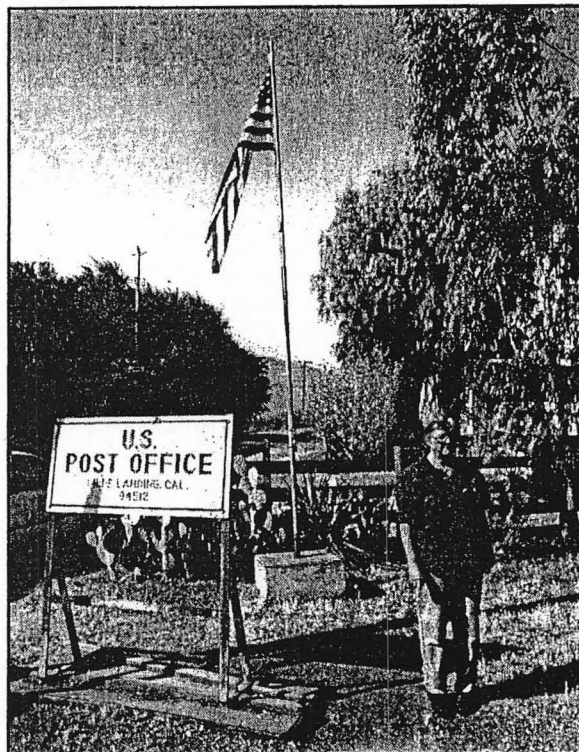
Today, Rio Vista has a few thousand residents and lies along Highway 12, which also passes through it.

It has a Smalltown, USA atmosphere, with a historic downtown and a strip of businesses along the highway.

■ **Bird's Landing** — This town near the Montezuma Hills and the Suisun Marsh consists of a few buildings and a few dozen residents.

It has one of the smallest post offices in the nation, not bigger than most people's living room.

■ **Collinsville** — Like Bird's Landing, today, it has few homes and residents, with



**Bird's Landing
Postmaster
Shirley Paolini
stands in front
of her post
office, which
is one of the
smallest in the
nation.**

Daily Republic/MARK PYNES

most of the town having vanished.

In the early days, Collinsville was a town on pilings to avoid flooding from the Sacramento to San Joaquin Delta.

It was a landing point for grain and had a fish cannery. But Solano County wants to build an industrial park with a deep water port.

NO LONGER AROUND

■ **Binghamton** — About 80 people lived in this small town several miles east of Dixon near the Yolo-Solano county line during the Civil War era. Some were apparently Union sympathizers who drilled, but never saw the war.

Only the cemetery remains today, though the town still shows up on the area map in the Pacific Bell telephone book.

■ **Maine Prairie** — This was a shipping point for alfalfa near the sloughs in the east-

ern county, not far from the Yolo-County line.

But the town was hit by floods in 1862 and the railroad missed it. The town no longer exists.

■ **Silveyville** — Elija Silvey, who started a hotel for travelers, founded the small town near Dixon in 1852. At night, Silvey would hoist a red lantern higher than the tall wild oats to guide travelers to his business.

Today, a plaque marks the spot of the old townsite.

■ **Denverton** — The town was founded in 1853 at a site alongside Highway 12, a few miles east of Suisun City, and originally called Nurse's Landing.

It was named after a traveling dentist named S.K. Nurse, but later changed to J.W. Denver, a congressman who got the town a post office. Nurse later became the first postmaster.

The town has since disappeared.

Military town, windy city, bedroom community

Fairfield

Settled: 1856, incorporated 1903
Size: 35 square miles.

City Hall: 1000 Webster St., 428-7400.

City Council: Mayor Chuck Hammond (elected 1993, term expires 1997), Council members Steve Lessler (elected 1993, term expires 1997) Perry Polk (elected 1991, term expires 1995), Noreen O'Regan (appointed 1993, term expires 1995) and George Pettygrove (elected 1993, term expires 1997).

City manager: Charlie Long.

Population: 86,000.

Racial makeup: 68 percent white, 14 percent black, 11 percent Asian, 1 percent Native American, 6 percent other and 13 percent Hispanic (also included in the other categories).

Average persons per household: 3

Income per household: Mean, \$49,000.

Population at poverty level: 7.4 percent.

By Barry Eberling

of the Daily Republic

FAIRFIELD — Captain Robert Waterman looked at the vacant fields near the Suisun Marsh in about 1856 and decided it would be a good place for a town.

The clipper captain founded a pioneer town and named it Fairfield after his hometown in Connecticut. For decades, it was smaller than neighboring Suisun City.

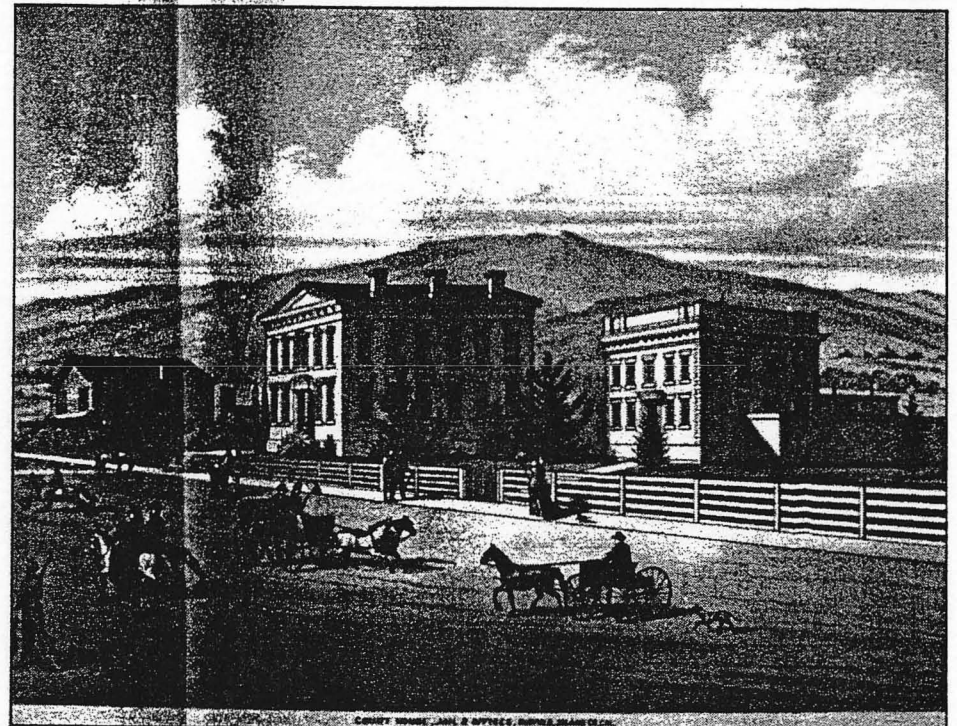
By 1925, Fairfield had only a few hundred residents and covered a few square miles, despite being the Solano County seat.

Things have changed drastically since then.

Now the city has a population of about 85,000, with the latest growth boom coming during the 1980s. It covers about 35 square miles, compared with the 46-square mile size of San Francisco.

Fairfield can be described in many ways.

For example, there is location. The main part of town is along Interstate 80 almost smack in-between San



Daily Republic photo from The Historical Atlas of Solano County/MIKE McCOY

Francisco and Sacramento, with the coastal ranges to the west, the Suisun Marsh to the south and the vast Cen-

tral Valley to the east.

Or there is its weather. Residents can expect about 20 inches of rain

annually, with maximum temperatures averaging 88 degrees in July and 55 degrees in December.

And they had best learn to tolerate the stiff west wind that rushes from the Bay Area through town on its way to the Central Valley during much of the summer. That's why many trees in the area lean toward the east.

And there is the character of the city.

Fairfield is known as a military town because of Travis Air Force Base, which opened more than 50 years ago. There are more than 10,843 veterans who live here, according to the 1990 U.S. Census.

It is also a government town, as the list of the city's 10 largest employers show. Travis comes first, providing more than 15,000 jobs. That outnumbers the residents in such Solano County towns as Dixon and Rio Vista.

After Travis, the honors go to Solano County government, the Fairfield-Suisun School District, Solano Community College, NorthBay Medical Center, Anheuser-Busch, Fairfield government, Macy's, Wal-Mart and

Please see Fairfield, Page A3

Fairfield

From Page A2

Sears.

Fairfield is also a bedroom community for the Bay Area due to cheaper home prices.

Thousands of people each day drive to work in San Francisco, Oakland and other locations.

The days of it being a farming town have passed, as was illustrated recently when Fairfield High School decided to drop its agricultural classes. But there are still orchards and vineyards in nearby Suisun Valley.

Fairfield is continuing to change. It is now looking to add thousands of more residents to the northeast area near Travis Air Force Base and the Green Valley-Cordelia Villages area.

At the same time, it is trying to establish open space preserves in nearby hills and between the city and Vacaville.

Bringing new businesses to local industrial parks is high on the city's priority list. Mayor Chuck Hammond has talked of the need of "romancing" businesses so there are more local jobs for residents.

But there's one change Hammond doesn't want to see. He moved here in '77 because Fairfield was "homey," the type of place where families spent time in the parks, and it remains that way today, he said.

County seat is home



CHUCK HAMMOND,
Fairfield mayor



STEVE LESSLER,
Fairfield council member



NOREEN O'REGAN,
Fairfield council member

to more than 87,000



GEORGE PETTYGROVE,
Fairfield council member



KARIN MACMILLAN,
Fairfield council member

Fairfield planners expect to see the town's population double in the next 30 years. Much of this growth is expected to occur northeast of town around Peabody Road.



Mark Pynes/DAILY REPUBLIC F

This is a view of downtown Fairfield, looking north on Union Avenue past the county building with Mount Vaca in the background

Fairfield founded in 1856 by Robert Waterman

FAIRFIELD — Bustling Fairfield is a town working hard to ensure growth doesn't rob its residents of the warmth and flavor of a family-oriented community with extensive parks.

Notorious clipper captain Robert Waterman founded Fairfield in 1856 after he retired from the sea. Waterman donated several acres of land next to Union Avenue to ensure the town became the county seat.

Historian J.P. Munro referred to 1870s Fairfield as "a pretty little town of considerable promise and possessing as it does the county buildings, there is considerable bustle to be observed during the sessions of the different courts."

Fairfield trailed its neighbor Suisun City in size for more than half a century until the opening of Travis Air Force Base during World War II and the construction of Interstate 80.

A combination of Air Force families and commuters moving to escape the urban problems of the San Francisco Bay Area boosted Fairfield from its 1940 population of 3,100 residents to more than 87,000.

Fairfield planners expect to see the town's population double in the next 30 years. Much of this growth is expected to occur northeast of town around Peabody Road.

■ Fairfield facts

Settled: 1856, incorporated 1903.

Population: 87,000.

Size: 35 square miles.

City Hall: 1000 Webster St., 428-7400.

City Council: Chuck Hammond (elected 1993, term expires November 1997), Council members Steve Lessler (elected 1993, term expires November 1997), Noreen O'Regan (appointed 1993, term expires November 1999), George Pettygrove (elected 1991, term expires November 1997), Karin MacMillan (elected 1995, term expires November 1999).

City Manager: Gerald Davis (interim).

Racial makeup: 68 percent white, 14 percent black, 1 percent Native American, 6 percent other and 13 percent Hispanic.

Average income per household: Mean, \$49,000.

Libraries: Fairfield-Suisun Community Library, 1150 Kentucky St., 421-6500.
Hours — Noon to 8 p.m. Monday and Thursday, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Tuesday and Wednesday, closed Friday, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday, closed Sunday (from Labor Day to Memorial Day).

Post Office: 600 Kentucky St., 94533. 425-8471.

Fire Department: Fairfield Fire Department, 1633 Union Ave. Fire Dispatch: 428-7300. Fire prevention and weed abatement: 428-7657.

Police Department: Fairfield Police Department, 1000 Webster St., 428-7300.

Old Archive Story

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By Barry Eberling

of the Daily Republic

FAIRFIELD - A scant 150 years ago, Fairfield had a population of zero and consisted of grassy fields and marshland.

There were Patwin Indians in the area. But nobody had yet conceived of Fairfield, much less come up with a name.

Now the city has more than 87,000 people and plans to almost double that number in the next 30 years or so. Fairfield is between Sacramento and San Francisco along Interstate 80, raising expectations in the development community of more businesses and more homes.

It's been a busy few generations since clipper Capt. Robert Waterman founded the town and donated land for the county seat. In the beginning, Fairfield was almost a backwater to the larger, thriving Suisun City, which itself had only a few hundred residents.

Historian J.P. Munro Fraser took a look at Fairfield in the 1870s.

Fairfield is a pretty little town of considerable promise and possessing as it does the county buildings, there is considerable bustle to be observed during the sessions of the different courts," Fraser wrote in his "History of Solano County."

"Its houses, for the most part, are enclosed by neat fences and well-kept garden, vineyards and orchards, while the streets are wide, though not much worn by traffic."

Historian Marguerite Hunt looked at Fairfield in the 1920s and called it a thriving little town that was smaller than its twin sister, Suisun City.

"Fairfield and Suisun may be linked together in the minds of the traveler, but to the residents they are as separate and distinct as if acres upon acres divided them, instead of one mile, long since reclaimed, where once the sloughs cut in and the tules were," Hunt wrote in her "History of Solano County."

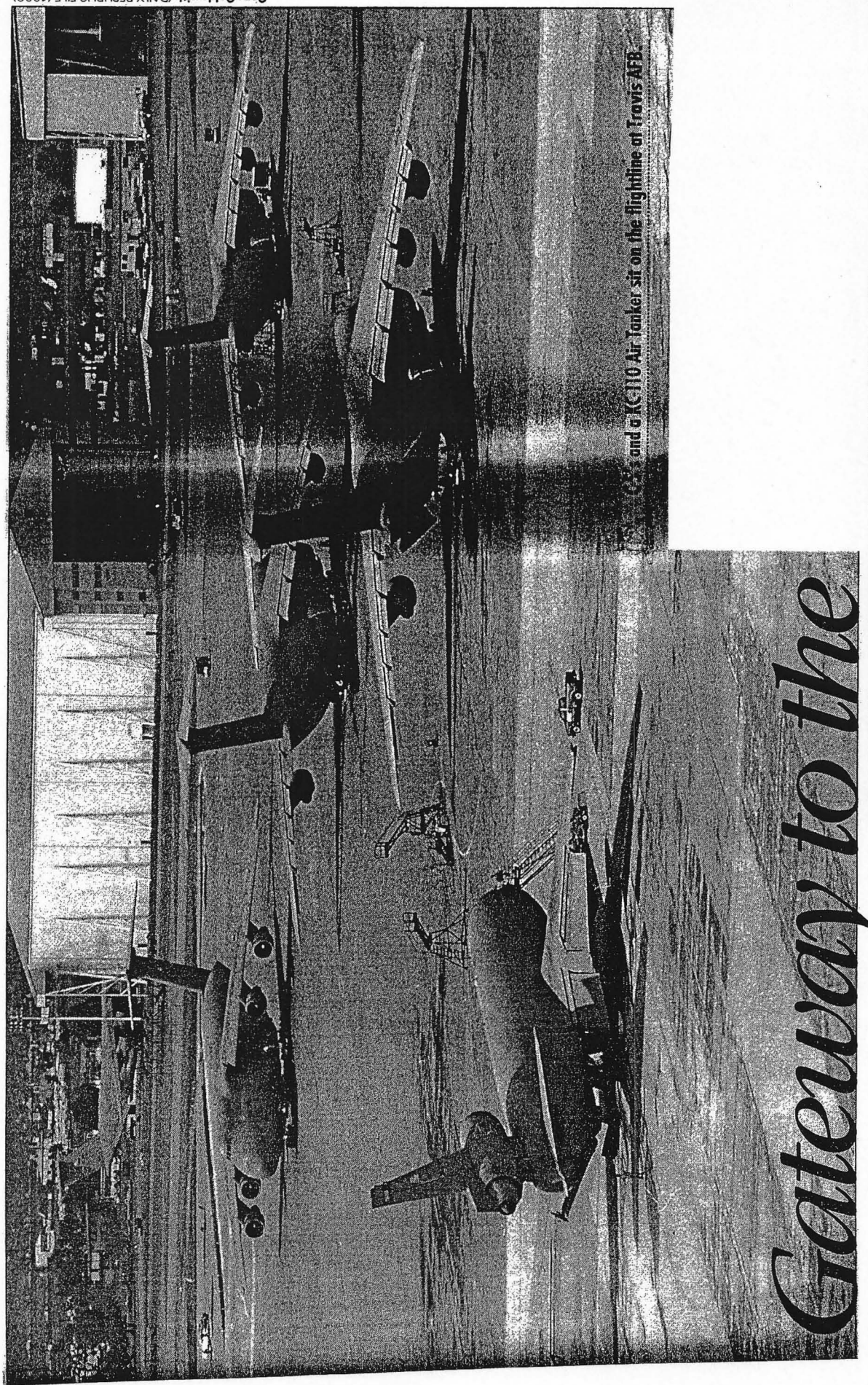
Travis Air Force Base opened more than 50 years ago when Fairfield had about 3,100 residents and helped to speed up growth. The city's location and home prices has in recent years attracted people who work in the Bay Area.

The city government's view of the town today is summed up in a recent Fairfield brochure.

"Fairfield combines the warmth and flavor of a small town with the vision and excitement of a progressive city. . . Fairfield has grown from its agricultural roots into a dynamic city, maintaining a balance of residential, commercial and industrial development with a broadly based and vigorous economy," the brochure said.

That vision is light years away from the days when Waterman was looking at vacant fields and dreaming.

Copy Story to Production



and a KC-110 Air Tanker sit on the flightline at Travis AFB

Gateway to the

PACIFIC

Mare Island and Benicia Arsenal played major roles in Spanish- American War and Phillipines conflict

By Ian Thompson
DAILY REPUBLIC

FAIRFIELD — At the turn of the century, powered flight was still an idea in Orville and Wilbur Wright's heads and Travis Air Force Base was little more than rolling, wind-blown fields.

Solano County was still a center of military activity with the Army's supply center at the Benicia Arsenal and the Navy's ship repair and construction work at Mare Island Naval Shipyard.

The Benicia Arsenal, established in 1851, was rapidly being eclipsed as an Army post by the Presidio in San Francisco, but it was still growing as an arsenal for both the storage and production of munitions and military equipment.

Mare Island Naval Shipyard, established in 1852, was well entrenched as the U.S. Navy's major West Coast base for repair and construction of the Pacific fleet at the turn of the century.

Both played a major role in the Spanish-American War and the Philippines conflict soon after.

The Benicia barracks supplied troops in the Pacific, especially those who kicked the Spanish out of the Philippines and later fought the Philippine insurrection. When the war ended, so did most activity at the arsenal.

Mare Island served the logistic and repair needs of the Pacific, overhauling and supplying most of the Asiatic Squadron that smashed the Spanish fleet in Manila Bay. Many of the country's first Filipino residents arrived here shortly after the turn of the century as stewards aboard naval vessels returning from duty in the Far East.

The Spanish-American War demonstrated the need for an adequate base to support the Pacific Fleet and created a sense of urgency in the Navy to expand the yard.

The turn of the century found Mare Island in the midst of a spurt of construction that followed an earthquake in 1898. It turned Mare Island from a red brick Victorian workplace to the beginnings of a modern shipyard.

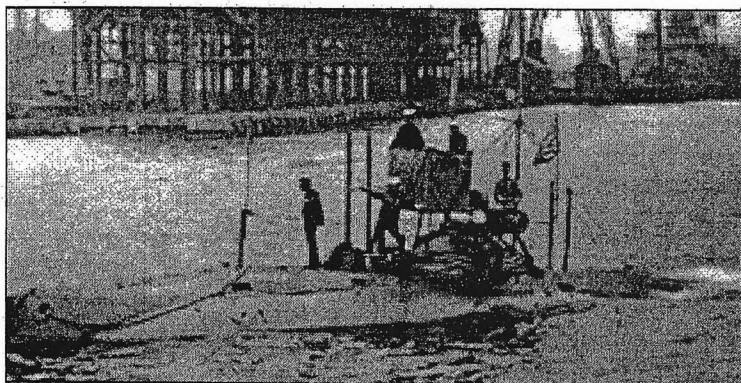
This was when one of the shipyard's most beautiful buildings — St. Peter's Chapel with its Tiffany windows — was

built in 1901 and is now the oldest existing naval chapel in the country. The present homes on officers row were built in 1901 to replace brick ones that were heavily damaged in an earthquake.

New military technologies were arriving at the shipyard such as the first wireless station that replaced the yard's messenger pigeon cote in 1904.

The Benicia arsenal also started retooling for modern warfare. Steam boilers were replaced with internal combustion engines, steam hammers were dropped in favor of compressed air hammers and more electric lights were strung up.

Mare Island became home to some of the Navy's first submarines, the Gram-



pus and the Pike, which tied up there in 1904 after their construction at the Union Iron Works in San Francisco.

One of the larger ships built at Mare Island at that time was the monitor Monadnoc which displaced 3,993 tons and was 263 feet long. The ship was launched in 1893 and later sent to China where she patrolled the rivers.

Fifteen years later, the shipyard beat that record by launching the collier Prometheus which weighed 12,585 tons.

The ship was the clincher in the long argument that ships could be built on the West Coast for less money despite the higher wages here. The Prometheus cost \$110,000 less to build than its East Coast cousin, the collier Vestal.

At the time, the shipyard was still unconnected and isolated from the rest of Vallejo except by boats and barges that serviced the island. It wasn't until a decade later that a causeway linking the island to the mainland was built.

Mare Island became home to some of the Navy's first submarines, like the Grampus, above.

By Ian Thompson

DAILY REPUBLIC

A century ago, Mare Island Naval Shipyard was the gateway to the Pacific, sending out ships and men to bolster America's newly assumed presence on the world stage.

As Solano County enters the next century, it is still considered one of the main gateways for the American military into the Pacific – but by air, not sea.

Travis Air Force Base, the Air Force's major air transport hub for the West Coast, carries the flag for Solano County's military presence.

The Benicia Arsenal, the Army's main post in Solano County, closed on March 30, 1964. Mare Island shut down in the early 1990s, closed by the federal government during military downsizing.

The arsenal was reborn as a successful industrial park where imported cars are landed and oil is refined. Mare Island is in the middle of its own resurrection with private industry filling the shops once occupied by Navy workers.

Travis AFB is the hardy survivor after a decade of base closures that saw the rest of San Francisco Bay Area military bases such as the Presidio and Alameda Naval Air Station close as well as McClellan AFB in Sacramento.

It is now home to two C-5 Galaxy jet transport squadrons and a unit of KC-10 Extender aerial refueling aircraft.

Air Force and Travis AFB officials make it a point not to speculate on the base's future, but they have repeatedly said the base will be here in the 21st century.

In part, that's because most of the military's overseas bases have closed. For all intents and purposes, bases such as Travis AFB, Hickam AFB, Hawaii, and McChord AFB, Wash., are those forward bases.

The majority of the troops, equipment and supplies needed to handle any overseas crisis now have to come from the United States and that means someone has to haul them there.

When NATO started its air war against Serbia over Kosovo, it was Travis AFB transports that carried troops there and Travis AFB air tankers that refueled the aircraft striking targets there. Air mobility has become the critical link in extending American military power overseas, making Travis AFB a critical link.

With the number of bases shrinking, Travis AFB is becoming home to more units and missions, and not just Air Force units.

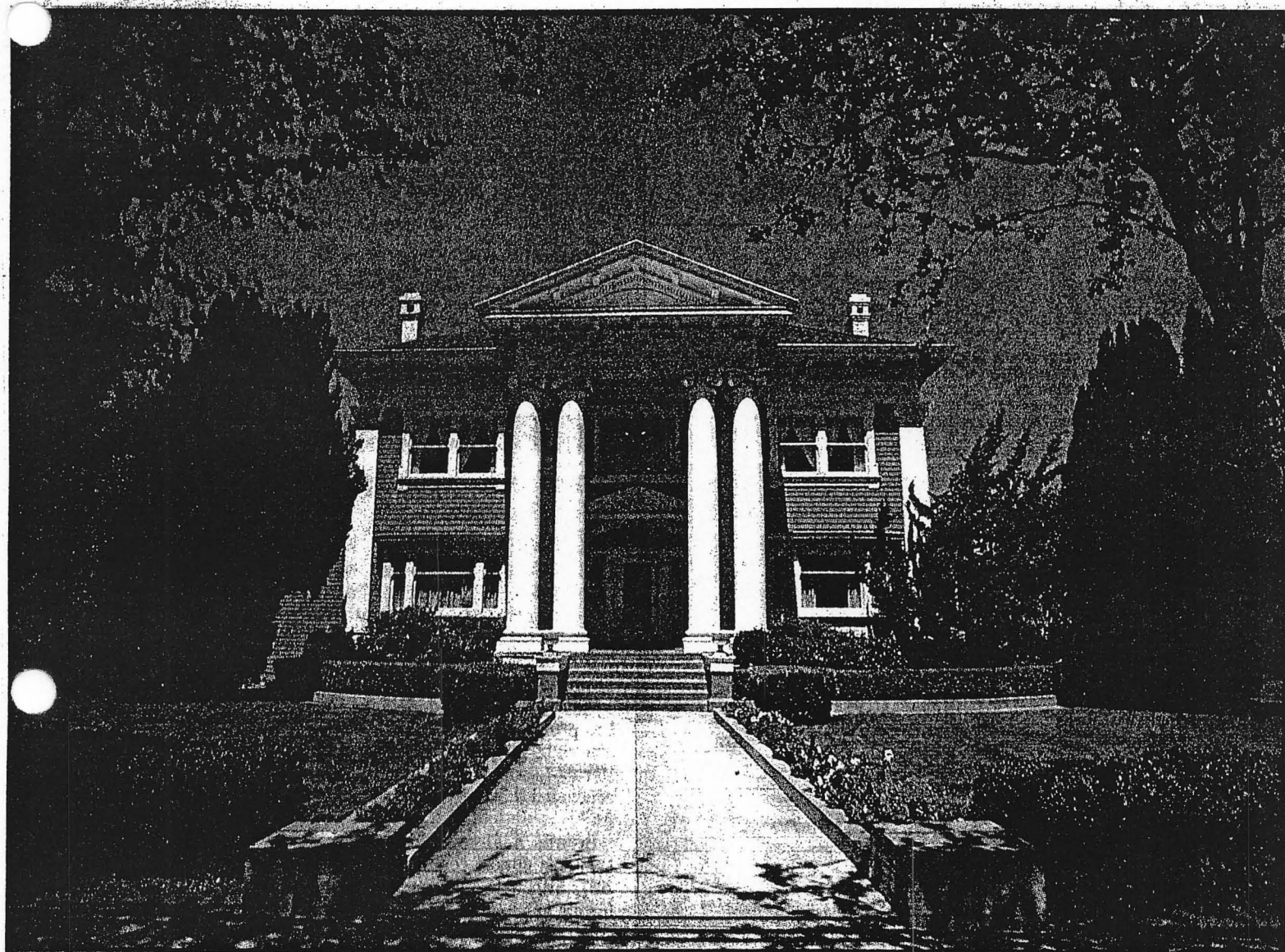
The Navy has made a home in the base's former SAC Alert facility and parked the aircraft it uses to communicate with submarines there. The Army moved in a training unit and the Coast Guard is considering Travis AFB has a new home for its search-and-rescue C-130s.

In a shrinking military that is trying to stretch its defense dollars, this is a trend that is not going to change any time soon.

Solano County has long professed its loyalty to its bases, snubbing peace demonstrators in the 1960s and fighting hard to save Mare Island from the military chopping block in 1993.

Travis AFB has become a hot button in the wars over open space and development around Fairfield and Vacaville. It's a battle that will continue into the next century as more people move to the area and developers push to build homes for them.

*Travis Air
Force Base
is the
West Coast's
major air
transport
hub*



DR Photo by Dudley Owens

Seventy-five years later, the Goosen Mansion remains Fairfield's finest piece of architectural heritage. It also has a rich history that includes playing host to such dignitaries as Nancy Reagan and Tip O'Neill.

Goosen Mansion's classic history

By Ian Thompson
Daily Republic Staff Writer

FAIRFIELD — They were the days when men of means retired to the study with a cigar and a good brandy after dinner to discuss politics and business.

With its high Ionic pillars without and classical craftsmen's touch, the 75-year-old Goosen Mansion is Fairfield's finest piece of architectural heritage and a monument to one of Fairfield's earliest businessmen, Henry Goosen.

The first Goosen to come to Solano County was Frederick, a native of Germany who crossed the Atlantic in 1852 in search of more opportunities than Germany allowed.

Late in the same year, after a six-month trek across continent, Goosen arrived in Solano County to start up a ranch in the Green Valley area.

Henry Goosen was born on the homestead on Jan. 23, 1860, one of two sons and four daughters. He attended schools in both Green

Solano Heritage



Valley and Suisun Valley.

Goosen's natural talent for the mechanical arts taught him to operate a steam engine by 16. It

also got him a job in a Vallejo machine shop during the winters while he labored at the farm during the summers.

At 19, partnered with two others, he bought a threshing outfit. After a year of operation, Goosen and one partner bought out the other.

In 1886, Goosen bought a mill in Cordelia and converted the building to a blacksmith and repair shop, a general implement factory and a hardware store.

See Mansion, Page A14

Mansion

From Page One

which he managed for the next 21 years with considerable success.

Fairfield's waterworks and plant was Goosen's next target, which he bought in 1902. The plant was struck by fire just before he bought it, making the price quite low. He owned it until 1925.

Under Goosen's direction, the waterworks were built up from practically nothing to serve Fairfield's 1,000 residents. He also supplied Suisun City's 700 residents whenever their supply was ex-

hausted "with magnanimity and without prejudice or insistence on a permanent contract," according to one history.

After ten years of work, locals lauded it as "modern in every way," with wells up to 80 feet deep and a 70-foot high reservoir. Wells were sunk on the only place Indians once got fresh water at a spring along the old freight road.

Two years after he bought the waterworks, he brought his hardware store to Fairfield too. Called Goosen's General Merchandise, it was located on the north side of the street at Texas and Webster streets.

Despite the fact that back then "Suisun City was the town for shop-

ping," according to early resident Evelyn Lockie, Goosen's was a popular store. The store burned to the ground in 1909 to be replaced by a concrete building further up the street.

In 1907, he moved to Fairfield from Cordelia. By that time, he owned considerable land and had interest in several businesses including the Winters Canning Company of Suisun City, the Green and Suisun Valley Telephone Company and the Aeromotor Company.

Married by this time and with three sons, Goosen employed three Scottish builders, McCullum, McDougal and Cameron, in 1905 to build a new home on the corner of

Empire and Madison streets.

The result, completed in December 1910, was the 12-room Goosen Mansion, a structure not equaled since in Fairfield for splendor. It cost an estimated \$10,000 to build.

Goosen's two story home was built in the Colonial Revival style with a huge front portico facing Empire Street, sheltering an Adamesque doorway flanked on both sides by Ionic columns. A smaller colonaded semi-circular portico faces Madison Street.

The popular late 19th century Georgian style is reflected throughout the building's interior. The windows are all leaded and

stained concave/convex glass and embossed garlands decorate the wood trims.

Inlaid hardwood parquet floors, delicately carved scrolling on interior columns, coved and coffered ceilings as well as a central staircase and three tiled fireplaces highlight the house.

The Goosen family kept the mansion until 1941 when it was bought by Dr. Gordon Bunney, who started Fairfield's first hospital. In 1947, Dr. Milton Smith bought not only the mansion, but Bunney's hospital and practice as well.

Smith soon became mayor of Fairfield and organized the fund-raising program which created

Fairfield's Community Hospital, converted to medical buildings in the 1960s.

In 1964, Manuel and Dru Campos bought the mansion. When Manuel Campos became mayor, the mansion picked up the nickname of "The Mayor's House."

While Campos was still there, the mansion entertained such visitors as Nancy Reagan, then first lady of California; Governor William Milliken of Michigan; California Attorney General Evelle Younger; and Speaker of the House Tip O'Neill.

Now the mansion, little changed since 1910, is the home of the Suisun Valley Bank.

dingler

Category: Features

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By Nancy Dinger

If you have ever traversed Empire Street in Fairfield, just one block south of the public library, you could not have escaped seeing the Goosen Mansion in all of its restored grandeur. Brick walkways, manicured gardens and a high iron fence with electronic security surround this palatial home today. Whether the home was owned by a doctor and transformed into a hospital (Dr. Gordon Bunny in 1941 and Dr. Milton Smith in 1947), or became the "Mayor's house" (Manuel Campos in 1963), then later headquarters of a local bank (Suisun Valley Bank in late 1980's) and subsequently lovingly restored beginning in 1991 by the present owners (Dr. Mary Mancini and her husband, Dr. Anthony Marino), it is still referred to as the Goosen Mansion.

Who was the man who built the mansion? Who was Henry Goosen? Henry's parents immigrated from Germany. Fredrick and Christina left for America with their two little girls. During the voyage, these children were taken ill, died and were buried at sea. The saddened parents settled in Cordelia around 1852 and began to dairy farm. America was still a very agrarian society. Industries were flourishing in the large eastern cities and towns were springing up with a mercantile middle-class, still the majority worked the land.

Fredrick and Christina began a new family in 1854 with the birth of Annie Goosen. The family expanded to total seven children by 1867.

The idea of having a "childhood" is a modern day concept, enacted around the 1950s. Prior to this period, it was not unusual that all the children, as soon as they could walk, would be put to work. When Henry (4th child) was 12 years old, he was deemed old enough to be sent to live and work with a Mr. David Hale at the Hale Ranch in Suisun. Henry was a quick learner and a hard worker. By the time he was 16 years old he had mastered the operation of steam driven farm machines. Henry stayed on the Hale Ranch for eight years. He would work for Mr. Hale in the summer, then for the J.L. Heald machine shop in Vallejo during the winter. It was during this time, in 1878, when Henry's father, Fredrick (Fred), passed away. A year later, at the age of 19, Henry joined with two of his friends, Christopher Harder and Henry Dittmer to purchase a threshing outfit. After the first harvest season, the two Henrys bought out Christopher's interest. Dittmer and Goosen ran the threshing business for several years. In 1886, Henry Goosen bought the old mill at Cordelia, converting the building into a blacksmith and repair shop, a general implement factory and a hardware store. Henry ran this business for 21 years with great success.

As Henry's success as a businessman grew, so did his fortune. He met and courted the lovely Katherine Marie Stark of Napa. The couple were married in 1897. From 1898 through 1902, Henry and Katherine produced three sons, Victor, Howard and Earl. With a growing family and a prosperous business, Henry purchased the Fairfield city water works. The purchase was made right after a fire had burned the plant down. Literally starting from nothing, he built the plant into a very large, modern and efficient operation. By 1907, he built a new hardware store on the corner of Texas and Webster streets in Fairfield. The family lived above the store. The historic 1909 fire almost wiped everything out. If Henry's foresight had not installed a high pressure pump, the store might not have been saved. Henry went to work restoring home and business with concrete walls. This is when the mansion concept began to blossom as well. The energetic entrepreneur hired three Scottish builders to construct the 12 room mansion. The construction was completed in December of 1910 and was by far the grandest home in Fairfield.

As fortune and prosperity smiled on Henry Goosen, not so did it favor his family. Victor, their first born, died in 1915 during the flu epidemic of World War I.

Never marrying, Earl died in his middle years. Howard did marry, but had no children. He died the week after his father's death, leaving Kate a widow and childless.

Henry's funeral in 1930 was quite a stately affair. His niece, Gwen Swope remembers vividly, how a red carpet swept out from the mansion's front door, down the walkway to the curb and the waiting hearse.

Kate stayed for some time in the mansion, finally selling to Dr. Gordon Bunny after establishing Child Haven, where she lived until her death in 1949.

Special thanks to Gwen Swope for her gracious hospitality and antidotal history of her uncle Henry Goosen.

Also special note of thanks to Burt Hughes of the Solano County Archives and Vacaville Heritage Council for all of the information he provided, as well as cooperation of the current owners of the Goosen mansion, DR's. Mary Mancini and Anthony Marino.

Reference: Solano and Napa Counties, California with Biographical Sketches: History by Tom Gregory and other well-known writers.

Nancy Dingler is a Vacaville resident, writer and historian. You can e-mail her at History_Whiz10@yahoo.com

Copy Story to Production

A hidden treasure

Buildings line Cordelia Road in the late 1800s.

COURTESY PHOTO



Gary Goldsmith/DAILY REPUBLIC

Older sister A stands in front of the old Cordelia Place, which is located in the town of Cordelia, Alaska. The photo was taken in the late 1800s.

Working to preserve Cordelia's history

By Barry Eberling
DAILY REPUBLIC

CORDELIA — For many people, Cordelia is the small town they quickly drive through as they take surface streets to avoid freeway gridlock.

They see some old homes, the Cordelia fire station, the Thompson's Corner bar and that's about it. Blink and you miss it.

To Daphne Nixon, Cordelia is far, far, far more. The town is a treasure trove of the area's history and she wants people to take notice before that history gets destroyed.

"You can't have a tomorrow without a yesterday," Nixon said. "It's good to know where you're coming from."

She wants to save what she calls a "wild Western semi-ghost town."

Cordelia's fate remains uncertain. It is a rural pocket with Fairfield growing quickly on three sides, seemingly poised to someday swallow it whole.

Also, Fairfield officials have talked of widening Cordelia Road to four lanes to handle all of those commuters avoiding the freeways. Widening the street would destroy build-

Cordelia's hotels and business district are long gone, victims of a June 20, 1939, disaster whose aftermath is still felt in the small town.

ings, Nixon said.

The town is recognized by the state as a historical district. But even that doesn't guarantee that the old buildings will remain if the road gets widened.

Nixon doesn't want to see



COURTESY PHOTO

The Cordelia Hotel stood at the corner of Pittman Road and Cordelia Road. This photo was taken in the late 1920s.

Cordelia treated badly by its younger sister. Before schooner skipper Robert Waterman founded Fairfield, he founded Cordelia in the early 1850s.

He located Cordelia about a half-mile north of the present site, along the stage coach route. He named the town after his wife.

Within a few years, Cordelia became Bridgeport and moved nearer to the railroad tracks and

sloughs. But the U.S. Postal Service rejected the name of Bridgeport in 1869, possibly because a town in Mono County had the same name.

So Bridgeport became Cordelia — again.

Waterman had big plans for Cordelia/Bridgeport to become the region's major shipping center for agriculture. Instead, newly founded Suisun City took the honors.

Nixon, her husband and children moved to Cordelia three years ago and she immediately started discovering its history. She found the deed to her property was dated 1867 and mentioned it bordered the Cordelia Wine Co.

She talked to neighbor Bob Lockefefer, who's memories of Cordelia date back for decades. He told her where to find the ruins of the turn-of-the-century Cordelia winery and much more.

When Nixon walks through the sleepy town, she can envision

See **Cordelia**, Back Page

Cordelia From Page One.

Cordelia during its early 20th-century glory days.

She can point to vacant land which once contained the old library, general store, Bridgeport Hotel, Moiles Hotel and barbershop, all of them gone. She knows the route down Cordelia Road that Billy Hamilton rode on April 23, 1860, when he delivered mail for the Pony Express.

To her, the old Dunker slaughterhouse is more than a ramshackle building. It's a relic of the Dunker brothers' early 1900s business, a mainstay of the early town. Their Dunker Brothers Meat Market delivered meat by wagon to local valleys.

The Dunkers did so well that John Dunker in 1916 built a large, two-story, Queen Anne-style home, with gables, a half-turret, balcony and large porch. This grand house still stands in excellent repair on Bridgeport Avenue.

Cordelia never grew to more than a few hundred people. Much of what growth it had got fueled by the nearby Nelson Hill quarry, which provided paving stones for San Francisco.

Cordelia's hotels and business district are long gone, victims of a June 20, 1939, disaster whose aftermath is still felt in the small town.

A fire of unknown origins broke out early that morning in the rear of the Cordelia Meat Market, recently sold by the Dunker family. Firefighters responded from Suisun City, Rio Vista, Elmira and Benicia, to no avail. A strong west wind fanned the flames. Firefighters



Gary Goldsmith/DAILY REPUBLIC

Daphne Nixon stands in front of the ruins at the Lockfeer home built in the late 1860s.

couldn't stop the blaze until most of Cordelia's business district lay in ashes.

"The fire was the worst in the history of Cordelia and has completely wiped out what was once one of the most thriving and best known little cities in Solano County," the Suisun City-based Solano Republican reported. "It is understood that none of the property owners will rebuild. Only a small amount of losses was covered by insurance."

And Cordelia entered a twilight that still continues. It remains in kind of a time warp, presenting one of the area's best examples of early 20th-century Solano County.

Nixon would like to see plaques along Cordelia's historical sites. She would like elementary school students to tour the town and learn about Solano County's pioneer past, when many a local town resembled Cordelia.

But Cordelia is unincorporated and has no town government. It is represented by a county supervisor who also must represent a district stretching into Benicia and Vallejo.

"We have no one to look out for us," Nixon said.

A grassroots effort is needed to preserve Cordelia's history, Nixon said.

Nixon is ready to make the effort. One of Cordelia's newest residents wants to make certain her town's past is remembered and honored.

"As well as new buildings, highways, developments and progress, we need roots, culture, heritage, history and a place for hearts to call home," she wrote in a recent Solano County Historical Society publication.

"Cordelia belongs to all of us."

Barry Eberling can be contacted at beberling@dailyrepublic.net.

Prosperity passed old Cordelia by

Suisun City usurped role as county's commercial center

(Editor's note: This is part of an occasional series depicting Solano County's history.)

By Ian Thompson
Daily Republic Staff Writer

SOLANO HERITAGE

CORDELIA — When clipper ship captain-turned-landowner Robert Waterman first founded Cordelia and later Bridgeport, he expected great things for both communities.

Early Cordelia was located on the stage road between Benicia and Sacramento and - if Waterman had gotten his way - would have been the crossroads for central Solano County. Bridgeport, located on Cordelia Slough, was to have been the commercial center of the county.

His hopes never materialized, according to local histories of the area.

Cordelia, the first of the two communities to be founded, was located in Green Valley on the southwestern area of Waterman's Suisun Rancho, a half mile north of the Suisun Marsh. The small town was the second oldest in the county; only Benicia was older. Cordelia had a German flavor with families bearing the names of Dunker, Glashoff and Siebe.

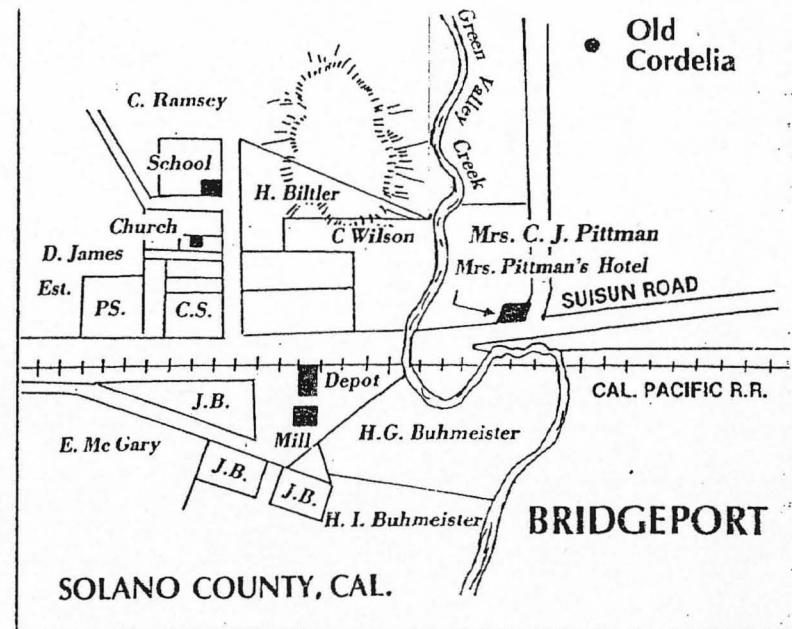
As early as 1853, a post office

was located in Cordelia, serving all the families in the Suisun and Green valleys. Despite its small size, the town established some prominence as the site of several early county conventions.

Waterman named the community after his wife, Cordelia.

The days of old Cordelia as a commercial center were numbered, thanks largely to the efforts of another clipper captain, Josiah Wing. Wing discovered an island in the marsh on Suisun Slough and quickly developed an embarcadero, complete with a wharf and warehouses to establish Suisun City as the upper county's commercial shipping center.

See Cordelia, Back of Section



This is a map of Bridgeport in 1878 as depicted in the "Historical Atlas Map of Solano County." Bridgeport is the site of present-day Cordelia.

DR Graphic

Cordelia

on Page One

Shortly after establishing Cordelia, Waterman founded Bridgeport a half mile away on a railroad line at the end of the slough, where the present-day Cordelia development stands. The new community was named after his wife's home town in Connecticut.

To better serve the railroad and shipping, Cordelia's post office was quickly moved to Bridgeport.

But because of possible delivery problems, postal officials ordered Bridgeport's name changed. The problem was that there was already a town of Bridgeport established in Mono County, and the Postal Service didn't want two town names with the same name in the same state.

Postal officials rejected the second Bridgeport's name in February 1869 and accepted the name of Cordelia. Even though postal workers referred to the area as Cordelia, locals referred to the community as Bridgeport lasted at least until 1880.

The California Pacific Railroad ran through the community, making it the center for shipping

Green Valley's crops to the east and stone taken from local quarries to the west.

By the early 1900s the town "had five saloons, three hotels (the Cordelia Hotel, the Moyles Hotel and Cordelia House), a livery stable, Siebe's general store, Dunker's butcher shop and three dance halls (one owned by the Glashoffs)," according to records and accounts provided by the late Hazel "Pet" Scarlett, who moved to the area as one of eight children in the McNaughton family.

"The town was a little German settlement. There was a little street here and a street here and the railroad through the middle. It was a railroad town," she said.

Little became of the original Cordelia, which was located near the Texaco Truck Stop on Interstate 80.

And almost nothing of the original Bridgeport-Cordelia remains except in memories of the few surviving residents.

Scarlett, who died two years ago, described the area on paper and a video-taped account for Green Valley resident and historian Shirley Schaufel in October 1979.

As a commercial center, Suisun was also a meeting place for regional dances and other forms

of entertainment, according to Scarlett.

"If we wanted to go someplace, we had to walk," Scarlett said. Going to a Suisun ball game meant walking five miles to the field and catching the train back, she said.

Schaufel noted almost all of those parties centered around celebrations of the area's agricultural produce, thus providing the forerunners of such current events as Vacaville's Onion Festival. Scarlett remembers going to strawberry festivals in Bird's Landing and peach festivals in Cordelia.

Scarlett remembered the quarries just outside of the town which supplied cobblestones to pave San Francisco's streets. Many of the stones were covered over with concrete but were later unearthed during construction of the Bay Area Rapid Transit system. More than 400,000 tons of stone were hauled out of the area each year.

"They rocked them out, made these blocks and hauled them out," Scarlett said.

Her father was one of those who worked the quarries, bringing the stones down on flat wagons to Suisun Bay to be sent on barges across the Bay to San Francisco.

Scarlett's mother ran one of the

hotels, a 15-room establishment with a massive dining room and a separate reading room for the men.

Scarlett described the town as "a wild place" with cow hands who ran cattle in the hills coming to Cordelia to celebrate. Scarlett remembers one group called the Cody Kids. "They'd come down and they'd get drunk and they'd go through town a shootin' out the guns in the air," she said.

As a child, Scarlett said it was common to step over men "sleeping it off" the next morning.

When she was 10, she vowed to be Cordelia's post mistress, a position of considerable prestige, Schaufel noted. At 17, she knew everyone in the area.

"There was no rural route. Everybody had to come to the post office for their mail. I had all of Green Valley, all up to Rockville, all Jameson Canyon, American Canyon and clear down to Benicia," Scarlett said.

Cordelia never grew much from the time Scarlett lived there. Fire or age claimed most of the original buildings in the 1920s and 1930s, except those at Thompson's Corners.

The town's surviving Trinity Lutheran Church was moved to Fairfield in February 1947.

Wild collection attracts many to tavern

By Marc Ballon
of the Daily Republic

CORDELIA — Casts, bras, panties, T-shirts, shorts, sports pennants and baseball caps hang from the ceiling like the remnants of a wild fraternity party.

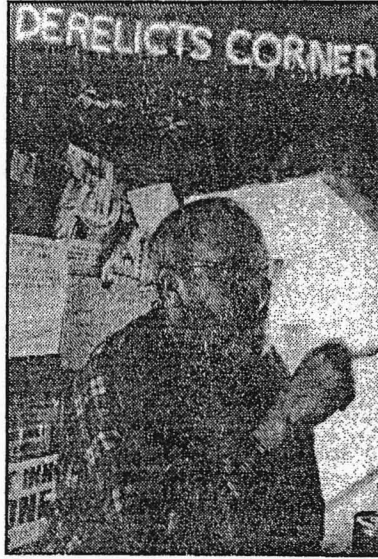
Tennis rackets, an American flag, old license plates, including one from Tennessee that reads "1 Elvis," sombreros and posters of scantily clad girls hocking beer decorate the walls with the subtlety of a sledgehammer.

Welcome to Thompson's Corner.

The bar, which has left customers smiling since 1902, has enough stuff crammed between its four smoke-filled walls to keep an archeologist busy for years. Even regulars marvel at all the mementos people have left behind over the years.

So how did Thompson's become the "Kingdom of Kitsch?"

Seems about 20 years ago, two women signed a dollar bill and tacked it to the ceiling, starting a trend that is as strong as ever, said Stu, the no-nonsense bartender who has been part of the



A patron enjoys his cigar.

decor at Thompson's for 18 or 19 years.

Over the past two decades, everything from artificial Christmas trees to bicycles to fish bones have hung from the rafters, giving the place the feel of an upside-down garage sale.

When somebody donates something to Thompson's, it becomes a permanent part of the landscape, unless, of course, the County Department of Health orders the stuff taken down as it

But upon a closer look, the graffiti beautifies far more than it defaces. In fact, the folks at Thompson's give patrons the pens to express themselves.

did several months ago, said Patti, a Thompson's bartender.

All clothing articles given to the bar must be removed on premises — in full view of everyone in the bar — otherwise they are rejected, Patti said.

So why would anybody give away perfectly good clothing?

"Because they're nuts or drunk," Stu said, bursting into laughter. "They do it so they can come in and say, 'That belongs to me,' or, 'That belongs to my girlfriend.'"

Dave, a regular for four years, has a different theory. People want to be noticed. They want immortality, he said.

"It's Andy Warhol's 15 minutes of fame," Dave explained. "Some woman takes off her bra, and she's got fame."

The ceiling can also serve as a memorial.

About 2 1/2 years ago, a man died in a car wreck. His friends brought the jacket he wore at the time of the crash to Thompson's and hung it from the ceiling to pay tribute to him, Dave said.

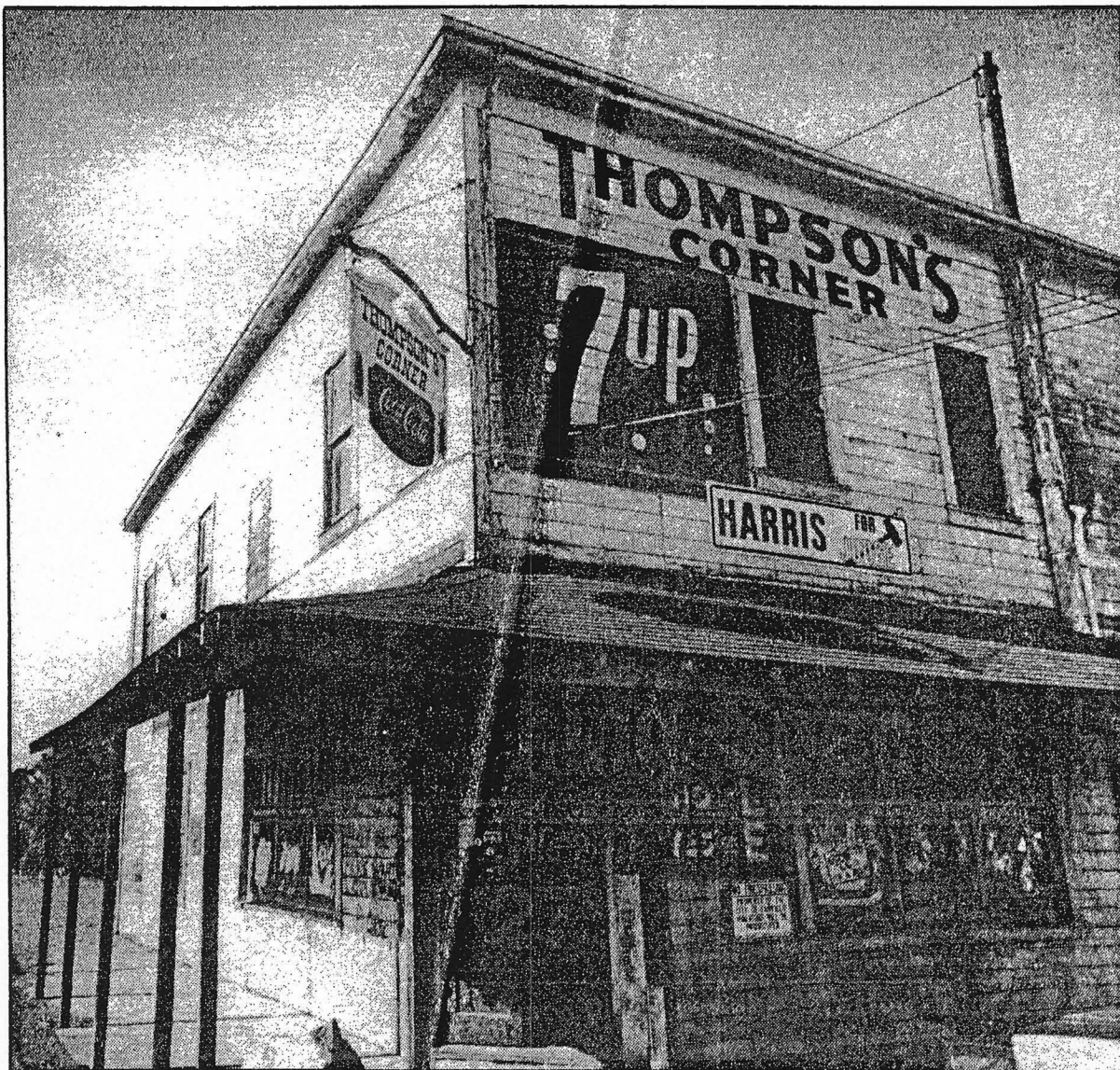
Out of "personal pride," Tom, one of Thompson's 50 regulars, came into the bar 15 years ago and took off his pants and underwear, leaving the latter for the



Daily Republic/GARY GOLDSMITH

True Tales, Tall Tales

Daily Republic — Saturday, February 29, 1992



Daily Republic/GARY GOLDSMITH

Thompson's Corner is a well-known watering hole, known for its unique style.

Looking upward from his bar stool, Harry quipped that the T-shirts, bras and baseball caps served a medicinal purpose.

"It acts as a filter. All the smoke and debris sticks to it," said Harry.

"Virgins" — those visiting Thompson's for the first time — are responsible for the bulk of the goodies on the ceiling, Patti said.

Regulars apparently prefer wearing their clothes to watching them hang above their heads.

But the cluttered ceiling is only one of Thompson's charms. —

Take a look at the walls.

At first glance they resemble the inside of a New York City subway train. They're covered with black-felt marker scrawl.

But upon a closer look, the graffiti beautifies far more than it defaces. In fact, the folks at Thompson's give patrons the pens to express themselves.

"Poor is the Man Whose Pleasures Depend on Others," reads one message. "Grow Your Own Dope — Plant a Man — Audie & Donna," says another.

"You go anywhere else and write on walls and get in trouble,"

Chuck Hengst said. "Not here."

About once a year, the drawings disappear under a coat of fresh white paint. But the pristine walls stay that way for about as long as it takes to knock back a tequila.

To Mary and others, Thompson's is more than a place to have a drink. It's like an old friend that gets better with age.

"The customers in here are like one big family," Mary said. "Everybody knows everybody and what their doing."

Stu put it simpler.

"It's like 'Cheers.'"

A history laid in stone



A quarry crew works on a hilly area around 1900.



COURTESY PHOTOS

There were over 500 workers at Nelson Hill during the turn of the century. Nelson Hill's life started in 1875 with basalt extractions.

Cordelia quarry paved way for many

By Ian Thompson
DAILY REPUBLIC

FAIRFIELD — When you walk along the older sidewalks of San Francisco's Mission District, you're treading on pieces of Cordelia.

The same could be said for the oldest parts of Sacramento or Marysville.

basalt slabs that make those sidewalks, or cobblestones that fill those streets, came from the oak-covered Nelson Hill just east of Cordelia and ensured the small town's prosperity in the late 1800s

and early 1900s.

Even after excavation in the rest of the area died out, the Nelson Hill quarry continues to operate on and off through the present day.

Nelson Hill's economic life started in 1875 when the Thomasson Quarry was opened to extract basalt from Nelson Hill, then called Thomasson Hill, according to "Our Lasting Heritage," written by the Central Solano County Cultural Heritage Commission.

"It primarily opened as a block quarry,

which were shipped all over the (San Francisco) Bay Area," said William Nelson. The hill is named after his family.

Basalt was widely used for paving stone at that time and was common throughout the ranges of mountains north of San Francisco Bay.

But only at sites such as Nelson Hill, with its easy access to water transport which came up Cordelia and Suisun sloughs, could the basalt be economically supplied to the San Francisco market.

See **Quarry**, Page A7

Working the rocks

During some years, several hundred men worked at Nelson Hill and two other quarries in the immediate area, giving Cordelia's economy a welcome boost.

"There were up to 500 rock cutters working on the hill at one time," Nelson said. "It was quite a large operation in those days.

"In those days, everybody worked at the quarry in one job or another," he added. "Groups of two to three men would work in little groups all over the hill."

Immigrant workers of different nationalities were put in separate crews because it was easier for those speaking the same language to work together, Nelson said.

Hazel M. Scarlett, an early Cordelia resident, described the quarrying business in her interview in the 1993 Solano Historical Society.

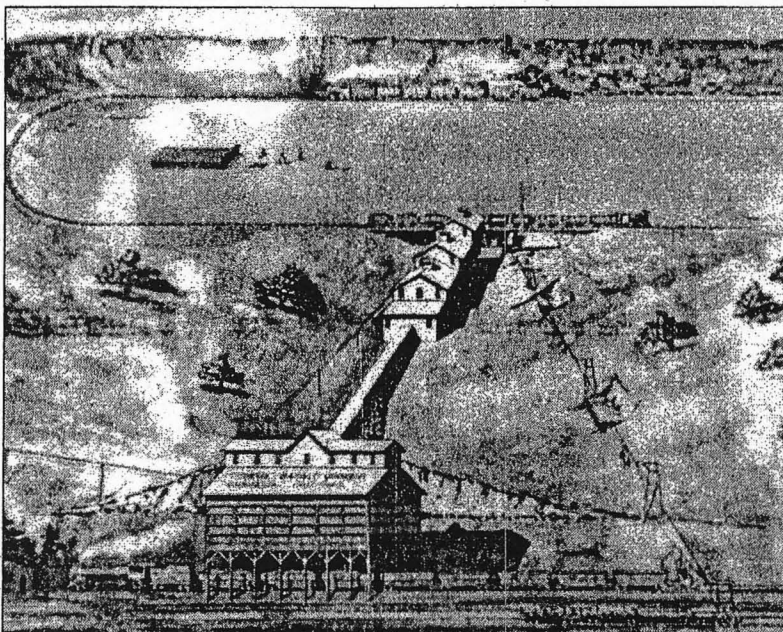
Scarlett's father worked with three or four other men to cut the stones and put them on an old flat wagon, which teams of horses pulled to the Suisun and Cordelia sloughs.

"They rocked them out, made these blocks and hauled them out," Scarlett said.

Barges then took the stones to San Francisco where they were deposited by the Ferry Terminal, Scarlett remembered.

The stones that formed the paving in front of the Ferry Building are now covered with cement, but out in the city's Mission District, basalt paving stones from Nelson Hill can still be seen.

More than 400,000 tons of stone were hauled out of the area each year at the height of the industry. Hundreds of the cut stones were stored around the hill awaiting shipment.



This map shows how the hill used to look in the late 1800s

"At times, there were 200, 300 stones awaiting shipment," Nelson said.

Creation of cars cut need for basalt

By 1913, the demand for basalt paving blocks had declined and only three men continued making them while the rest remained at work providing crushed rock for the Southern Pacific Railroad.

"When the auto came in the 1920s, that business finally ended," Nelson said, noting road-building firms turned away from cobblestones toward asphalt and gravel.

The stones were pulled off the hill in large trucks with steel wheels pulled by teams of six to eight horses. They were called "skid trucks" because of an iron plate under the wheels that would be used as an anchor to keep the trucks from getting

away as they were pulled down hill.

"They would drop the iron plates under the wheel and the horses would have to pull a bit," Nelson said. "We cut up the last of those old skids in World War II because there was a shortage of metals."

Construction firms still needed gravel. So did the railroads. So Nelson Hill continued to be quarried.

"In 1934, they were shipping out 40 to 60 rail cars a day for the Southern Pacific (Railroad)," Nelson said. "The SP (track) went all the way up the hill to ship the rock out."

The road now used by the DaSilva-Gates Construction Company was the route of the SP spur line where SP engines hauled the cars up and back.

A large rock crushing plant was opened in 1906 and operated until the end of the war.

"Some of the rock went to Travis and other government

bases," Nelson said. "There is Nelson Hill rock all over the area."

A future park?

The hill's now-flattened crest is mainly used to store construction for the DaSilva-Gates Construction Company, which also occasionally quarries gravel from the hill.

"The hill was once 150 feet higher than it is today," Nelson said.

Nextel also has a telecommunications antenna there to serve growing numbers of mobile phones.

The quarry sites themselves, both on the top and sides of the hill, are mainly overgrown with brush. The hill is also home to thousands of white concrete highway dividers.

The last proposed development of the area was an informal query from people interested in putting housing at the top and base of Nelson Hill.

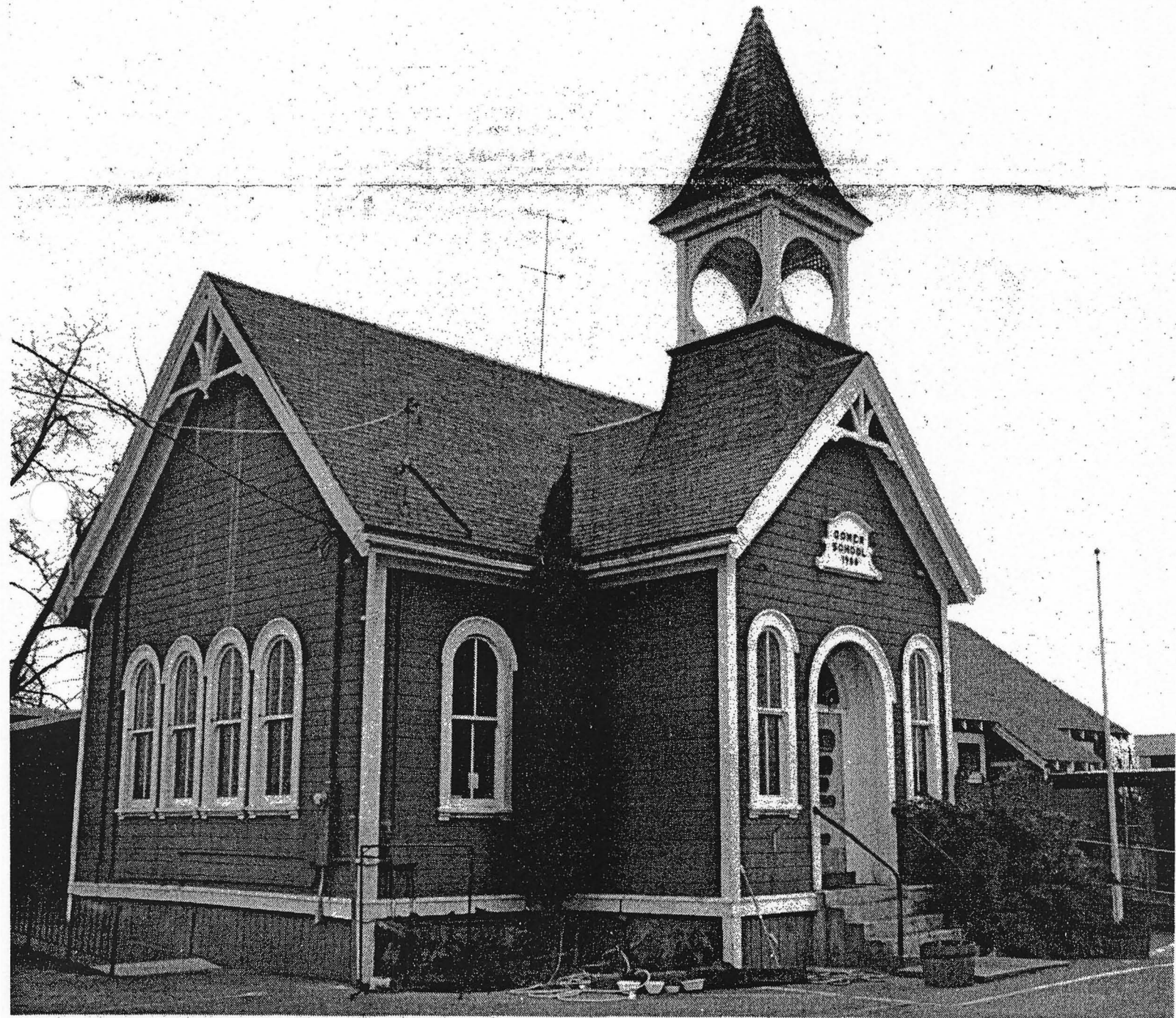
"We have not had any kind of proposals for its development for at least 10 years," according to Fairfield Assistant Director of Planning Eve Somjen.

Any such development and annexation is not expected for at least five years, according to the city's annexation plan.

Before anyone does anything with Nelson Hill, Fairfield will have to come up with a master plan for how the city wants the 230-acre site to look. The city plans to include significant open space along the ridgeline and slopes that protects and preserves the native trees there.

The plan is also expected to include a city park at the top of the hill as well as a trail system to take advantage of the view of the Suisun Marsh, Green Valley and Suisun Valley.

Older than the century ...



DR Photo by Mike Major

A survivor of an era when many Solano County residents received their schooling in one-room buildings, Gomer School still stands today. It has most recently housed a bakery and been used to teach mentally handicapped students.

One-room schoolhouse survives

(Editor's note: This article is one of an occasional series detailing the heritage and history of Solano County.)

By IAN THOMPSON

Daily Republic Staff Writer

GREEN VALLEY — Up until the early 1950s, Solano County was still a region with traditional one-room schoolhouses dotting its rural areas.

Few of those schools still stand, their interiors long empty of teacher and students. Two, the Dover Country School and the Suisun Valley Road school house, are now a private residence and property of the Suisun Nisei Club, respectively.

There is one exception.

The 85-year-old red Gomer School, nestled amid the orchards four miles west of Fairfield near Abernathy Road, still houses students and education still

Our Solano Heritage



flourishes inside its walls.

The chalkboard is covered over, the desks are gone, there's a bakery where the older students used to sit and a small restaurant occupies the school's newer second room.

But, Gomer School still hosts a special education program, the first of its kind in Solano County.

Gomer's present building, with its high windows and bell tower, is actually the second school to sit on the historic site. The first was

built in 1857 and called Suisun School No. 2.

The first school reportedly was not built very well. It hardly earned any plaudits four years after construction from Superintendent of Public Schools of Solano County J.W. Hines. An 1861 introductory report by Hines to the state notes that point in complete candor.

"Suisun, No. 1, has a miserable, old dingy house scarcely fit for a respectable stable," wrote Hines. "Suisun, No. 2, has a house similar to the one above. Unfortunately, however, it has been more recently built, thus dismissing the probabilities of getting a better one soon. It contains one room, and nothing else."

At that time, there were only 3,151 students and 31 teachers in Solano County.

Before residents got down to the

business of building good rural schools, Solano County's schools weren't in the best shape. Hines' less-than-favorable report wasn't confined just to those two schools.

"Suisun, No. 4, is situated in Fairfield, and is a standing disgrace to the county and the people of the district. It is made of wood, stands in the edge of the tule, and I fear will never be liable to spontaneous combustion," he wrote.

"Green Valley, No. 1," he continued, "is well-painted, and secured by a good fence, and from the character of the trustees, is well adapted to the purposes for which it was built. It lacks proper ventilation, a common fault."

"Vacaville, No. 4, is an old den, they call a schoolhouse. It is emphatically the worst thing that

See School Page A12

School

From Page One

inet held the school's library.

Although the children were well-behaved, Hudson carried the revolver given her by the matriarch of the Chadbourne family. The Chadbournes were worried about vagrants in the Jameson Canyon area.

Van Putten has been attempting to fill in holes in Gomer's history for six months.

One mystery concerns the school's name. Common knowledge holds that the one-room school was named after a Mr. Gomer. But no one today seems to know who he was.

Area tradition says Mr. Gomer donated land for the school, according to an article by local historian Wood Young. But Young also wrote that since no land records exist from the 1850s, this version cannot be conclusively supported.

Van Putten is also stumped. "I love any information on who he was," she said.

The earliest mention of the school is an 1855 deed to the school commissioners of Suisun Township No. 2. "Mention is made of a school house situated near Captain Wing's residence in the valley," Young said.

Of it, County Superintendent J.W. Hines wrote in 1861, "Suisun, No. 1, has a miserable, old dingy house scarcely fit for a respectable stable. Suisun, No. 2 (Gomer), has a house similar to the one above. Unfortunately, however, it has been more recently built, thus dismissing the possibilities of getting a better one soon. It contains one room, and nothing else."

Young thought the first school was private, supported by the area's settlers. The first record of trustees shows W.C. Sheldon, W.G. Divisson and W.H. Turner on the

1884 school board.

In 1888, Solano County Superintendent Calvin Webster wrote that the building, "although an old one, has been refitted and is in excellent condition." Webster also said Gomer's teacher, Luella Gillespie, was one of his best.

The eucalyptus trees that still shade Gomer's schoolyard were planted in the late 1800s by Byron Sheldon, father of a student who graduated in 1896.

But then the old building was razed to the ground because it was obsolete, Young said. The high-gabled present school with its bell tower was built in 1900 when Fred Chadbourne Sr. was a trustee. Few class pictures fail to include a Chadbourne, Sheldon, Davisson or Woolner — prominent Suisun Valley families.

Hudson recalled that in her time, the school's water came from a well in the playground. "Everybody drank from the well. They drew a bucket of water and brought it inside and it had a ladle on it. Everybody drank from the ladle. Nobody died," Hudson said.

The room also contained a Seth Thomas wall clock, blackboard and a pot-bellied stove fed by wood that trustees brought in every summer. "Bleak, but effective," Hudson said.

Hudson credits her students' good behavior to her predecessor, Mary Fairchild Bauman. "Besides the fact that the children were from a different caliber of family than we meet up with nowadays. They were substantial, grounded orchardists," Hudson said.

Gomer was Hudson's second assignment. She got her teaching credential at the Solano County Courthouse in a three-day exam given by the Solano County superintendent.

"It covered everything from all the normal things, your reading, your writing. You even have to (be tested on) music, physics and



DR File Photo

Former Gomer School teacher Gertrude Winslow Hudson demonstrates one of her other talents in a Gordon Valley orchard — water-witching or locating water by divining.

chemistry — the whole gamut. And besides that, we had to compose some music," Hudson told historian Clyde Low in May 1988.

She got three job offers in 1909 — Gomer, one at Napa Junction and Gordon Valley. Hudson picked Gordon Valley "because it was about to fold and they were trying to keep it alive, and I took it for training."

The next year she moved to Gomer. The job paid \$70 a month for 10 months; \$67.50 for teaching

eight grades and \$2.50 for doing janitorial work. To make ends meet, she cut fruit in the summer.

Van Putten and the committee are appealing to Fairfield and Suisun Valley residents to search their attics and closets for "anything that can tell us a little more of Gomer's past," Van Putten said.

To help, contact Van Putten at David Weir, or the committee at 422-8330.

Solano falls

County's single waterfall kept under lock by Vallejo

By IAN THOMPSON

Daily Republic Staff Writer

FAIRFIELD — Solano County is not a place known for its waterfalls, but it does have one tucked away in a rather hard-to-find corner of Green Valley.

At the turn of the century, it was known as a good spot for adventurous picnickers. One early visitor described it as "a hard place to find, but well worth the rugged walk to such a secluded and delightful vale."

"It's lush and green," said one more recent visitor who took the long hike up into the gorge. "It's a long walk and I would compare it to Muir Woods or falls I've seen in Hawaii."

It's also securely under lock and key.

The lock and key belong to the city of Vallejo's Water Department. Any trespassers going beyond that gate at the end of Green Valley Road or hiking overland are cited and fined.

The city of Vallejo is serious, too. According to those who have hiked up to the falls, Vallejo employs a caretaker just to catch trespassers and cite them for crossing onto Vallejo property.

Vallejo has owned title to the land surrounding the falls since the turn of the century. Though

Our Solano Heritage



the area is actually closer to Napa, it's Vallejo who uses the watershed. It has long supplied fresh water to both Vallejo residents and the Mare Island Naval Shipyard.

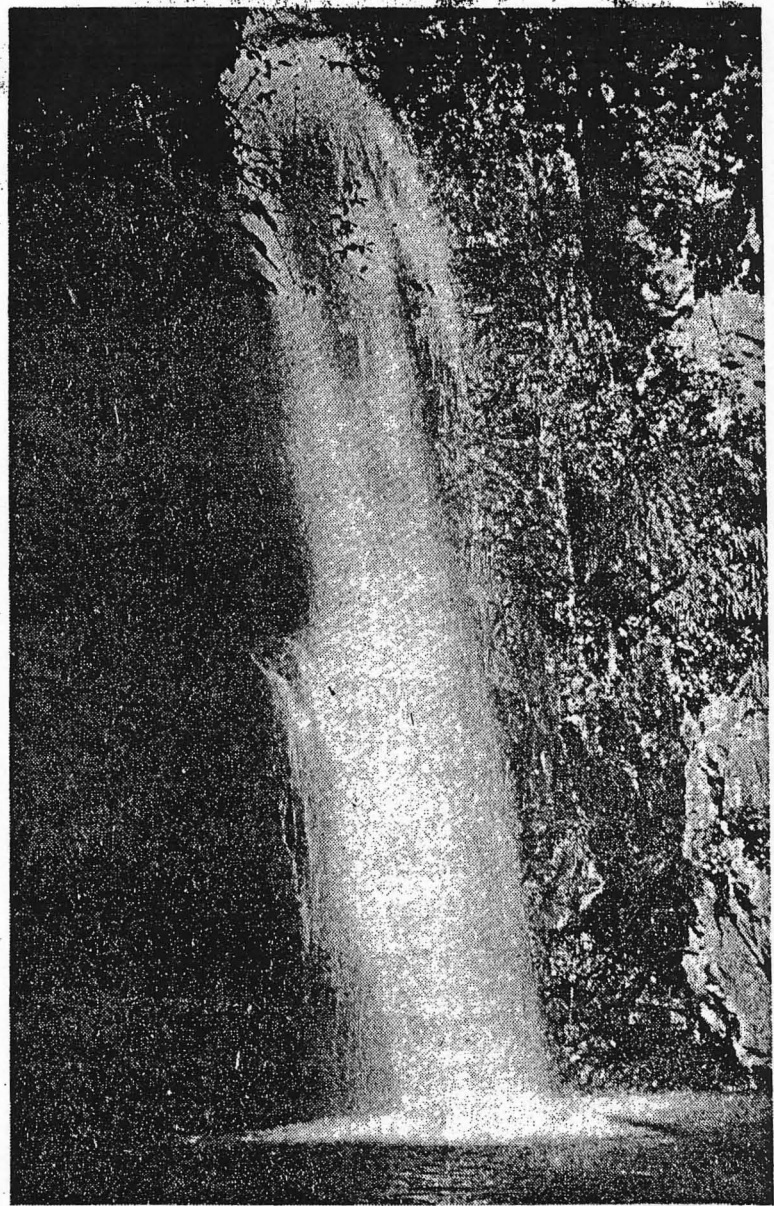
Those few allowed to visit the falls do so with the permission of Vallejo Water Superintendent Ervin Folland, who said the area has been locked up as long as he remembers.

According to Folland, the fact that the falls have been off-limits has kept them pristine and almost untouched. Folland said it also has kept any possible visitors from damaging the area.

"They (the falls) are not that big, either, and they only run when we release water from upstream," said Folland, commenting on the scenic attractions of the area.

Even if Vallejo were to open the

See Falls, Page A12



Courtesy Photo

This photograph from a 1915 pamphlet depicts Solano County's only waterfall, located on land managed by Vallejo's water department.

Falls

From Page One

falls area, city officials say it's too rugged to be safe for children. The city also doesn't have enough manpower to police and maintain the site. "If it were safer and bigger, maybe, it'd be open," said Folland.

The few allowed into the area include an occasional Boy Scout troop allowed to camp a mile below the falls.

Biology classes from Solano Community College also are allowed to send field trips up there a couple of times during the school year to

study the ecology. "Getting up there is really sticky because of trespassers," said science teacher John Nogue, "but they've (the Vallejo Water Department) been good to us."

The group visits the falls to study the basic biology of a streamside area. The fact that the falls and the nearby gorge are locked up is a partial blessing.

"It's a fairly untouched area up there," said Nogue, adding he has spotted deer, wild turkey, salmon, steelhead and other wild animals which no longer frequent the more inhabited lower parts of the valley.

Few obstacles in finding Green Valley Falls

By Kathleen L'Ecluse

of the Daily Republic

GREEN VALLEY — It may seem that the biggest obstacle to getting to Green Valley Falls is the large gate posted with "no trespassing" signs at the end of Green Valley Road.

But that's only the beginning of the ticklish and somewhat treacherous path to this secluded and fragile place.

When we traveled to the falls more than a week ago, it had rained the day before so the hills were damp and creeks full. We drove about half of the two-mile trek to the falls, then had to get out and hike because we could go no farther without a four-wheel-drive vehicle.

The first task was to cross the rocky creek which prevented the truck from going on. The six-foot-

wide stream wasn't too deep and had some strategically placed rocks to make crossing easier. Even so, we quickly found that the water was cold.

The path at first was wide and speckled with sunlight that shot through the trees above. It slowly climbed a hillside, easy enough to hike, although some people might be short of breath at the top. The reservoir worker who escorted us chuckled that we "haven't seen nothing yet."

We slowly descended into a small meadow, with trees and grasses rising quickly to our right, and a creek downhill to the left. The path curved to cross another creek, although this time a plank bridge prevented any wet accidents.

This was where the real hike began. The path narrowed to about two feet, and quickly rose

up the side of a hill. We started up the hill, which got to the point where it was so steep we were almost rubbing our noses in the dirt before us. The wet soil didn't help.

As we concentrated on climbing, we emerged from the trees to see that we were in a wide gorge that started back down Green Valley and which would end at the falls themselves.

As we went up, the hillside we traversed also became steeper, with the wildflowers and rocks reaching up on our right and the creeks dozens of feet below to the left.

Finally, after some "view stops" and huffing and puffing — the reservoir worker said he needed three stops to make the hike when he first started, but that he could do it without a stop now — we reached a flatter

The trail continued up a flight of about 12 wooden steps, again with the rail. Now the hill rose to our left and the stream was on the right. After another 100 yards, with the air becoming mistier and the gorge rising even higher above us, we came within sight of the falls.

The railed path went on for about 40 feet. Then we came around a curve on the hill to see the first dam, which was about 30 feet high and six feet wide, with no railing. It was easy enough to walk across, although it could make some afraid of heights queasy.

stretch that had a rickety handrail.

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At first they seem quite small, but as you leap from rock to rock and get to the second dam, you realize that the falls are about 40 or 50 feet in height. The pool at the bottom of the falls, which is created by the dam, is quite wide,

but doesn't look too deep.

The trek itself takes about 20 minutes, but is well worth the effort. And, according to an article first published in 1879, the hike hasn't changed much.

"The morning was breezy and damp and the grass and the bushes dripping wet," the anonymous author wrote. "For a while the road was very good. It then became a wide path, then a sheep trail, then a forest of dripping chaparral, and as we floundered around it, we almost fancied we were in the river up to our shoulders.

"At last we spied a little shanty away down on the bank of the stream and good road beyond," he said. "We descended the hill as best we could.

"The house was vacant. We then started up the road. The wheel tracks soon vanished and at last it became simply a trail,

and we were beginning to lose all hopes of reaching the falls."

The author finally met a resident who was fishing in the creek and who encouraged him with news that the falls were just around the bend.

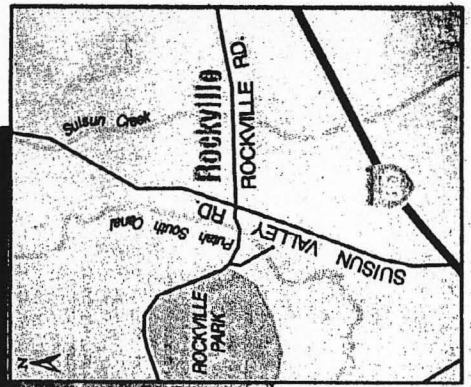
"A few minutes' walk brought us to where we could see the water shimmering down the facade of the solid wall of the mountain," he said. "We then saw that we were more than paid for the trouble.

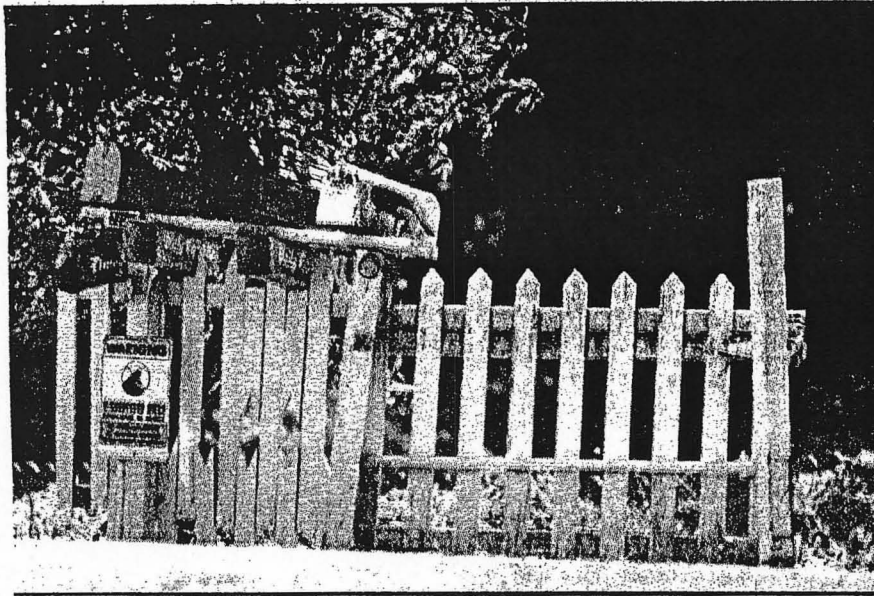
"We have seen many falls from the grand, stupendous Niagara on down through the various grades, but seldom have we seen so small a fall so beautifully located and surrounded by such picturesque scenery," he added. "Space forbids an extended description of it. It is enough to say that it is a sight well worth going to see."

Country Crossroads

Rockville is often more a state of mind
than a point on a map







Far left, Heidi Jones shops for flowers at Green Valley Floral with her son, Joseph Jones, Michelle Clark and Kyle Smith. Left, mailboxes along Rockville Road show a little of the flavor of the Rockville Corners area. Below, Minister of music Bob St. John, lower left, directs the Rockville Presbyterian choir during their weekly rehearsal at the old Rockville Pioneer Church next to the Rockville Cemetery.

Photographs by
MARK PYNES

By Barry Eberling
of the Daily Republic

ROCKVILLE — It's easy to find the general location of Rockville on a detailed local map.

But figuring out precisely when you're entering and leaving this historic hamlet that rests against the coastal hill range west of Fairfield is more difficult.

For example, the American Automobile Association map shows Rockville about at the intersection of Rockville and Suisun Valley roads. And this location is the commercial hub of the hamlet, with a Cheaper market, the Rockville Inn, the Valley

Cafe and about 15 other small businesses.

Yet the map shows no boundaries for a village that has no town council or other governing body and is part of the unincorporated county.

Bill Russell recently tackled the question of Rockville's boundaries while drinking some coffee in the bar at Rockville Inn, the jukebox blaring out tunes in the background. He's president of the Rockville Homeowners Association.

Rockville includes the land within one mile of the crossroads, Russell said. He considers the small housing subdivision of Willotta as part of it, but

wouldn't deny residency for a family he knows living between Rockville and Green Valley, he said.

Rockville is also a community of people living in the rural area who like it the way it is, he said.

"It's a conceptual thing," said Russell, who often pauses before answering, as if searching for the right words to express his thoughts.

Russell, who sells and installs dental equipment, is interested in environmental causes. After moving to Rockville 10 years ago, he found one in his own backyard — saving Rockville from being developed.

Please see Rockville, Page

Rockville

From Page E1

No one is building new subdivisions there at the moment, but Russell is vigilant. His association recently joined with the Green Valley Landowners Association to fight plans for the proposed 570-home White Wing Estates luxury development in the nearby unincorporated hills.

"Miners took a canary into a cave for an early warning (of deadly gases)," Russell said. "Rockville is almost like a canary. I'm trying to save the canary."

He sees Rockville as a microcosm of what's happening all over the nation. People are fleeing from the cities — Russell himself once lived in Los Angeles and San Francisco — to rural areas, but that in turn threatens the rural qualities that everyone wanted in the first place, he said.

Fairfield residents can enjoy the rural Rockville area, Russell said. For example, they can come and hike in Rockville Hills park, he said.

Dolores Johnson and Ruth Fleeman are also vigilant. Johnson moved to Rockville in 1974.

"This is what I wanted," said Johnson, who has silvery hair and is wearing a green shirt, blue jeans and tennis shoes as she sits in a booth at the Valley Cafe. "It wasn't way out in the boonies, yet there was lots of space."

Fleeman moved to Rockville in 1977 and Johnson immediately invited her to join the homeowners association.

"We weren't even unpacked," Fleeman said.

They've kept an eye on who wants to open what business



Daily Republic/MARK PYNES

Farm equipment slows traffic along Suisun Valley Road.

in Rockville over the years. For example, they opposed plans for a restaurant that would have had bands at night and scrutinized plans for the Valley Cafe.

"We found out what they were going to do and how they were going to do it," Johnson said. "We usually check out everything that comes into the neighborhood. If somebody does try to get in without our knowledge, we get upset."

The biggest problem is the threat of urbanization, Fleeman said. She rolls her eyes when reminded of some nearby landowners' offer to donate land to the Fairfield-Suisun Unified School District for a new high school, saying its another

attempt to develop the area.

People in Rockville don't sit around drinking coffee together and chatting all the time, but they help each other, Fleeman said.

"People leave you alone to do your own thing," Johnson said. "But if you need help, they're there. I think that's the biggest plus to Rockville."

Development threats seem a world away from the Rockville cemetery down the street from the cafe. Here amid the grass and stone tombstones, pioneer families such as the Mangels and Alford have buried their dead.

Ron Pienovi is the cemetery foreman. He lives in Cordelia, but grew up in Rockville and

his parents still own the building that once housed the family winery.

"I probably ran tractors discing this orchard when I was a kid," Pienovi said recently as he looked at the farmland near the cemetery, his arms and face tanned by the sun and his hair slightly graying.

And, after being in construction for 30 years, he's back working in the area where he started, he said.

Among the attractions in the Rockville area are Rockville Hills Park, the Rockville cemetery and 1856 stone church, century-old farm buildings and the fruit stands in nearby Suisun Valley.



Rural county town evokes memories of pioneers, Indians and the Civil War

by Barry Eberling
the Daily Republic

ROCKVILLE — Nedla recently explored the inside of the old stone church at the Rockville cemetery, her footsteps sounding on the bare wooden floor. She was planning her wedding and wanted a place that evoked the Civil War era. People at the ceremony later this month will wear such things as Confederate and Union military uniforms and topskirts and listen to an 1862

Episcopalian liturgy used in the South.

Nedla, who chose not to give her last name, looked at the stark wooden pews, the large wooden cross and the portrait of the pioneer Wolfskill family, whose faces surveyed the scene with stern, unsmiling expressions. And she liked what she saw.

"We chose the church because of its history," Nedla said.

Her fiancé believes in state's rights and that was a Confederate cause, Nedla said. But their wedding will bring the opponents of

the Civil War together, she said.

She couldn't have picked a better local place for this symbolic healing. A dispute among Union and Confederate loyalists once splintered the Rockville church congregation.

The Civil War wasn't fought in Solano County, but passions ran high in the congregation that built the stone Rockville church in 1856. The two sides argued and the final split occurred in 1863 when Northern loyalists began singing "Battle Cry of

Rural

From Page E1

Freedom" at a Sunday service.

Southern sympathizers put up a plaque with the inscription "Methodist Episcopal Church South 1856." Angry Northerners pulled out of the congregation.

Long before this episode, the Rockville area was the site of a Suisunne Indian tribal village and home to Chief Francisco Solano.

Rockville was founded in 1850 when pioneer John Perry looked at the old dirt stagecoach road in Suisun Valley and decided it would be a good place for a blacksmith's shop.

The site was the crossroads of the route leading between Benicia and Sacramento and the path connecting Green and Suisun valleys. And central Solano County didn't have a blacksmith's shop, a necessity in a rural farming community.

"Here . . . the music of the anvil was first heard in the valley and John M. Perry produced a rude kind of plow at the moderate price of \$65," said the 1878 "Historical Atlas Map of Solano County" by Thompson and West.

But the Suisun Slough that carried ships was several miles to the east, near Suisun City. In 1868, the Central Pacific Co. built the local section of the transcontinental railroad near Suisun City.

As a result, Perry's cross-

'It formerly had a post office, hotel and store, but now, Ichabod, the glory is departed! Rockville is a veritable 'deserted village.'

— J.P. Munro Fraser
1879 "History of Solano County"

roads never became the hub of a growing agricultural community that needed to get its goods to market.

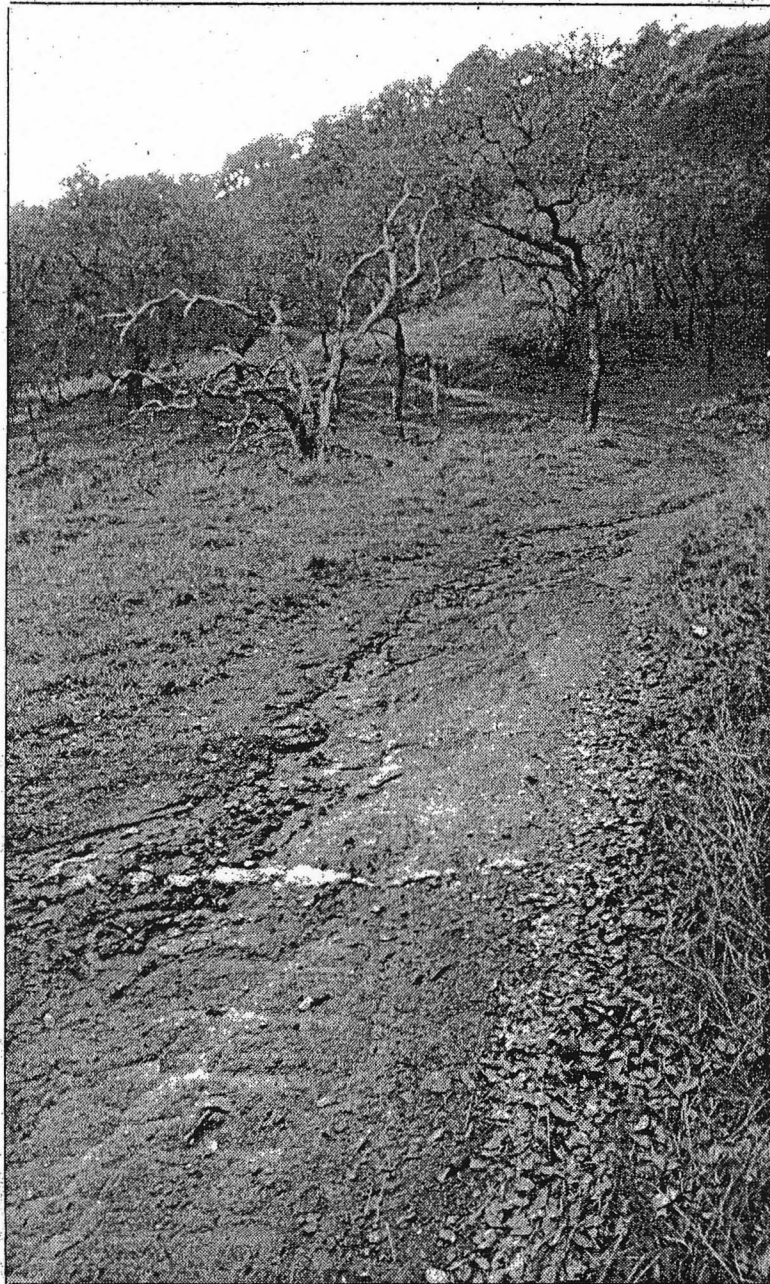
J.P. Munro Fraser noted the rapid downturn in the village's fortunes in his 1879 "History of Solano County."

"A stone church, a school house and a solitary village blacksmith's establishment make up the present city," Fraser wrote. "It formerly had a post office, hotel and store, but now, Ichabod, the glory is departed! Rockville is a veritable 'deserted village.'"

More than 100 years later, Rockville still retains its rural atmosphere.

Please see Rural, Page E2

Rockville Hills Park — a hidden gem



DR Photo

Rockville Hills Park remains in its natural beauty. To get there, take Rockville Road east from Fairfield. About one mile past the intersection of Rockville Road and Suisun Valley Road, turn left into the facility's parking lot.

To the uninitiated, Rockville Hills Park might, at first glance, seem a little desolate. I mean, after parking on a strip of blacktop, you peer through a chain link fence and see a hillside covered with some kind of non-descript scrubby growth. *This is a Fairfield city park?* Where are the grassy fields, the baseball diamonds, the picnic tables? For pity's sake, where are the *restrooms?*

A word of caution, however. Don't let your preconceived notions of what a city park ought to be blind you to the special resource our community has in Rockville Hills Park.

I discovered the park one Sunday morning when my husband and I were searching for a new place for our early walks. I had known the park existed, but knew nothing about it. What we found was a unique opportunity to hike, explore, climb rocks and observe nature in an area that's relatively undeveloped. (OK, OK, there are some unsightly power lines I could do without, but basically, the area's in a pretty natural state.)

Climbing to some of the high spots rewarded us with excellent views of Suisun Marsh, Green Valley and the surrounding orchards. And looking carefully among the outcroppings of rocks turned up telltale depressions of Indian grinding stones.

What we didn't see were any other hikers.

The hills are composed of volcanic ash, called tuff ("toof"), accumulated eons ago after the eruption of distant volcanos. The tuff is covered by a thin layer of soil, and about the only things that like to grow here are oak trees and chapar-

Dorothy
Kupcha
Leland

**HELLO,
SOLANO**



ral.

The Suisun Indians called the hills *yul yul* — place of the setting sun — and indeed, the park is a magnificent vantage point for viewing a colorful sunset. Because of the abundance of oak trees, the Indians combed the hills thoroughly in the fall, gathering acorns for their winter food supply. From their hillside lookout point at *yul yul*, they watched the Spaniards enter the Carquinez Straits, an incursion which could change the Indians way of life forever.

After the coming of the white man, the area's tuff was found to be an excellent building material. The modern name "Rockville" came from a nearby quarry, which mined tuff in the late 1800's. Several tuff buildings still stand in the Green Valley area.

The city of Fairfield acquired the land for Rockville Hills Park in 1966, and had various ideas about what to do with it. For a while, there was a controversial proposal to develop the land with a golf course, shooting range, and man-made lake.

Public outcry against that eventually resulted in a five-year moratorium on development being placed on the park in April, 1982. The five years will be up this April. According to city parks official Bill Skinner,

Fairfield currently has no plans to change the park when the moratorium expires.

"The golf course proposal is definitely dead," he explains. "Even if people wanted it, soil studies show that it's just not feasible."

But Skinner says the park as it stands is "severely under-utilized," usually attracting only a few hikers and some organized groups like the Boy Scouts. "We may need some development to make it more accessible to other segments of the community."

Monique Liguori, director of the Suisun Marsh Natural History Association, considers herself a special friend of Rockville Hills Park. She periodically leads tours there for school children and the public, and enthusiastically supports keeping the park as undeveloped as possible.

"This is one of the few areas in the country that is close to a natural state," she says. "I feel the less done to it the better."

She says it gives school kids an opportunity to learn about how the local Indians lived, and about natural history, in a way that wouldn't otherwise be possible.

Yet, she agrees with Skinner that not enough people know about and appreciate the park. Some limited development (perhaps restrooms?) could help change that.

Liguori's next public tour of the park will be on April 25, from 9:30-11 a.m. Take Rockville Road east from Fairfield. About one mile past the intersection of Rockville Road and Suisun Valley Road, turn left into the facility's parking lot.



Judith Sagami/DAILY REPUBLIC PHOTOS

For some Solano County residents, the old Iwana Market building stands as a symbol of the hometown grocery stores of the past.

Iwama Market has varied past

Residents recall its days as grocery, restaurant

By Kristyn Giles
DAILY REPUBLIC

FAIRFIELD — The antique white building at 2451 Rockville Road was once a rocking diner and a busy-bee grocery.

Before that, the site of the Pierce Ranch horse barns, a blacksmith shop, a bunk house, and Chinese quarters.

Today, the place is a sleeping giant, exhausted behind a line of tall trees. It doesn't get much foot traffic, only seasonal kiwi sales and an occasional deputy looking for lead-footed speeders.

In the late 1920s, the building with the Iwama sign featured live bands, dancing and Southern cooking. Bandana Lou's was a family-owned restaurant with sizzling fried chicken.

Vera Oliver, 88, remembers visiting the popular hangout with friends. She was in high school then.

"It was the place to go," Oliver said. "We didn't have all the hamburger places like we have now."

Fried chicken, biscuits and honey wrapped in a red-and-white checkered cloth, placed

in a basket — this was Bandana Lou's business secret. For Oliver, the old-time diner was a periodic treat.

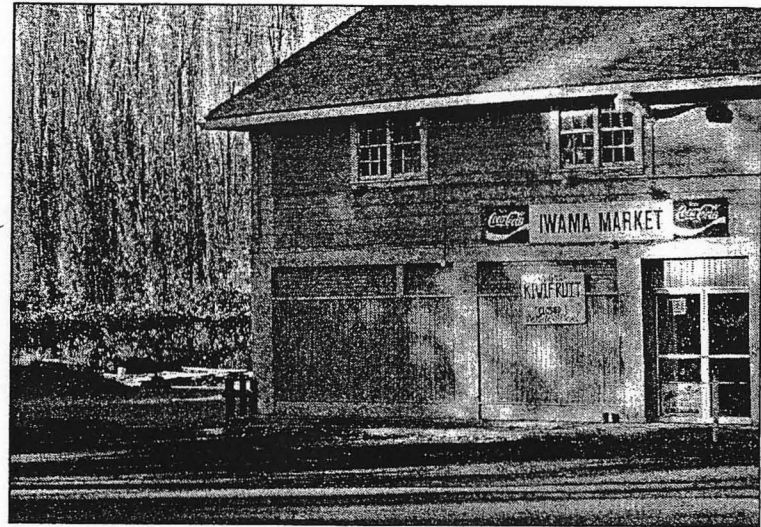
"I didn't go that often," she said. "People didn't have that much money back then. Going to Bandana Lou's was kind of special."

Visits were also special to Gwen Swope, 87, who remembers going to Rockville Road with her mother and family friends.

"We had a car, and Mrs. Lambert and her two children would go with us," Swope recalled. "We were close family friends."

Swope remembers tables and benches surrounding a dance floor. The diner was well lit with a big fireplace, she said.

**What
is
that
thing?**



Home to different businesses over the years, the building now sits quietly behind some trees along Rockville Road.

The last time Swope visited the old hangout was last year, to purchase kiwi from the restaurant-turned-market.

"That place is famous for its kiwi," she said.

After World War II, old Bandana Lou's transformed to Iwama Market, an exchange much different from today's flashy supermarkets.

"Who does not remember Iwama Market?" asked Leanne Pearson, who once shopped for meats at the full-scale grocery. "It had a great butcher shop with marinated meats."

Pearson can't recall when Iwama's closed, but remembers going there in the early '80s, when she and her hus-

band were still dating.

Bob Hansen, who visited the market as a young boy, said Iwama Market was in a "totally different league from Raley's and Safeway."

"It was a hometown market," he said. "I don't think we have any more of those left in Fairfield. They used to all be family, mom and pop stores."

Iwama Market was a place for great prices and service, Hansen said. Its owner shopped around for quality produce and meats, most locally grown, he added.

With its rich past, Iwama Market, Bandana Lou's or whatever you want to call it, sleeps quietly for another venture.

Iwama

Old country market's origins traced from horse-barn days through WWII

(Editor's note: This is one in an occasional series of articles about Solano County's history.)

By Randy Bechtel
Daily Republic Staff Writer

SUISUN VALLEY — It's little wonder Ramzi and Janan Toth, new owners of the Iwama Market, were uncertain of the origins of their store and the building it occupies.

Not only is the Iwama Market Suisun Valley's oldest grocery store, but it resides in a building already 90 years old when the market was created.

Said Ramzi Toth: "The old-timers say, 'You better keep it going. I've been coming here since I was a little kid.'"

According to Lewis Pierce III, the wooden structure at 2433 Rockville Road was originally a horse barn, built by Pierce's grandfather in

1876. Its conversion to a commercial building amounted to Pierce's father bowing to historical change and the new era of the automobile.

Rockville Road became Highway 40 and the horsebarn appropriately became a gas station, recalled Pierce. Later, in 1927, the building by Suisun Creek became Bandana Lon, a restaurant specializing in fried chicken, potatoes and

See Iwama, Page A14

Our Solano Heritage



The Iwama Market, above, a familiar fixture for decades to anyone who's traveled through Rockville, was built in the 1870s as a horse barn. It first became Iwama Market in 1946.

Iwama

From Page One

biscuits."

"It was a lot better than Kentucky Fried Chicken," recalled Pierce. "It was pretty popular until the road changed, in about 1940."

After serving as a clubhouse for Army Air Force personnel during the war — "I think it was called Hangar Seven, or some number," said Pierce — the building was

leased to Frank Iwama.

An old employee of the Pierce family, Iwama had been shipped to a Japanese-American internment camp in Arizona during the war.

"In those days, when they were letting them out of relocation camps, they had to show they had a place to go," Pierce said. "Frank had worked for my father for years. When he asked if he could come back here, we said, 'Sure, come back.'"

The Iwama Market — a name that has remained despite three different owners — was born in 1946.

Following the death of Iwama in the 1960s, the business and its lease were purchased by the Azahars family, which later sold to the Hor family, Pierce said.

The Toths, former owners of Sunset Deli in Suisun City, purchased the store two months ago. "I plan to keep it the same," Ramzi Toth said.

Although attracting shoppers from all over the valley, the store has always been a popular meeting place for farm workers. "Even people in Mexico hear about Iwama," Janan Toth said.

Chapel has fascinating history

The many pioneer families named in an old newspaper article has prompted me to write again of the Rockville Stone Chapel, the oldest church building surviving in Solano County. The story handed to me was written by Wood Young; it was published in the Daily Republic, Sept. 13, 1968, and the impetus for the story was "Old Timer's Day." Celebration of that event was Sept. 22, 1968 at the church.

Young tells that by 1852, when 160 males voted at the first general election held at the Berry ranch in the Valley, people had conceived of building a church. At several camp meetings, \$5,000 had been raised and many men — led by local stone masons Joel Price and George Whitley — had volunteered their labor. The site of five acres was donated by Landy and Sarah Alford. Volunteers quarried the stone from adjacent hills. It was soft when buried below ground level, but hardened on exposure to the air. The cornerstone of this, the Methodist Episcopal Church, was laid Oct. 3, 1856, and formal dedication took place in February of 1857.

Slavery was an issue that caused a split in the church as early as 1846, according to Young. Many Suisun and Green Valley pioneers had come from the South and were predominant in the congregation. Hence the stone plaque over the church entrance reads, M.E. Church South — 1856.

Tragically, the first burial in the cemetery was Landy and Sarah Alford's 3-year-old daughter. The local Pangbur family is descended from the Alford's. Among many pioneers buried there are William B. Brown, a church founder, and Granville P. Swift, a member of the Bear Flag Party.

In 1879, pioneer Lewis Pierce donated three additional acres for the growing cemetery and, in 1897, J.M. Baldwin Sr. gave 2.68 additional acres; part of this was already being used for graves. According to Young, some remembered the funeral of Charles Campbell, immediately after the San Francisco earthquake of 1906. The services were held outside the Stone Chapel for fear of another earthquake.

In 1929, when the chapel could no longer be



B Hancock

maintained, it was donated by the Elmira-Rockville charge of the M.E. Church South to the County. The building and cemetery were given with the stipulation that the chapel should be restored as a pioneer monument, not to be used for secular purposes, the name plaque not to be removed and the building to revert to the church if these promises were violated.

During the Depression, the chapel deteriorated badly. In 10 long years, the lower ceiling with the kerosene lamps fell, the floor rotted and stained glass windows were broken.

In 1940, the supervisors, headed by J.B. Danielson, restored the old building to its pristine glory as an historic landmark, using WPA labor. It was re-dedicated on Decoration Day of that year.

The clipping had three good size pictures. The first of Mrs. Alford shows quite a stern-faced woman, probably the preferred pose of that time. But the corkscrew curls of her coiffure are right in fashion for today. The restored chapel is shown and its registration as State Historical Landmark No. 779 duly noted. A much older picture shows iron bands below the eaves which helped the stone walls survive the San Francisco earthquake of 1906.

There are many contemporary graves in the cemetery as well as the old ones and the church is now refurbished and in use. Rockville Presbyterian Fellowship meets there "In the friendly style and bold spirit of the pioneers." Pastor is Larry Vilardo.

B Hancock is the wife of a former Daily Republic publisher.

Old Archive Story

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Allison Landa /DAILY REPUBLIC

Pastor John Carson looks over the grounds occupied by Rockville Bible Church from 1947 to 1990. The building is now the home of Rolling Hills Church.

Allison Landa /DAILY REPUBLIC

This bell once chimed throughout Suisun Valley, letting all know church services were under way.

Sixty years of faith ; and a place of their own

Rockville Bible Church celebrates anniversary, history

By Allison Landa

DAILY REPUBLIC

RODELIA - Finding a place to call home was never easy for the congregation at Rockville Bible Church.

They've worshiped in a gymnasium. A field. Even the porch of a tavern.

But the tavern's owners threw them out. Bad for business, they said.

On Nov. 2, Rockville Bible will celebrate 60 years of faith. The church has persevered despite a nomadic history.

It's a continuity held dear by Rockville pastor John Carson.

"It's pretty incredible," Carson said.

"Churches are like marriages. Not everyone who starts, finishes."

Rockville Bible got its start in November 1937 from the Jungkerts, a couple involved with the American Sunday School Union organization.

"They had a vision for the Chinese migrant workers," Carson said. "They went around and were (saying) that on Sunday, they would meet at the corner."

That particular corner was Rockville Corners, specifically, an open field located at what is today the corner of Rockville Road and Suisun Valley Road.

On that Sunday morning, 19 people convened to worship in that lonely field on the corner.

"It's not exactly how people would start churches today," Carson chuckled.

The following week, they were invited to meet at a local woman's home.

And thus, the series of moves began - to the porch of the fateful tavern and beyond. In the 1940s, the church bought a parcel of land in Suisun Valley for \$1.37 - a sale contingent on the promise that there would be something built on that six-tenths of an acre.

That promise was kept. By 1947, a one-room Sunday School house had risen up amongst the lush trees and farmland.

"It was the Little House on the Prairie church," Carson remembered.

One particularly memorable aspect about the building, he said, was the bell that chimed atop it.

"It would ring throughout the Valley," Carson said. "On Sunday mornings, you could hear it throughout Suisun Valley, Green Valley, and everyone would know it was time for church."

Rockville Bible added on to its original building over the years, but it still remained the Little House on the Prairie church at heart.

At last, it seemed, Rockville Bible had found a home.

But an expanding congregation would soon create growing pains.

Carson took the helm as the church's fourth pastor in 1986, after a troubled time in the church's history. Its membership had fragmented and was down to approximately 45 worshippers.

Within Carson's first two years, the congregation had tripled in size.

"I just preached the Word. God heard these people and they kept telling their friends about the Word," Carson said.

Growth was a boon for morale - but terrible on space constraints. Parking was at a premium, and Sunday School classes were bursting at the seams.

"Kids were packed in here like sardines," Carson said.

Something had to be done.

"It became real obvious we needed to move," Carson said. "We just kept growing." In 1990, Rockville Bible sold the building they'd had since 1947 to Rolling Hills Church, and moved to temporary quarters at Fairfield High School. It would be a trying time - but also one of humor and continued growth. Services took place at the front end of Fairfield High's gymnasium. Classrooms were rented for Sunday School. Baptisms were performed in the high-school pool.

But, Carson said, his congregation remained loyal throughout, with membership eventually reaching 150 families.

"You would think it would have been a time when people stopped coming, but we grew at the time," he said. "They didn't come for the aesthetics."

In 1992, after two years at the high school, Rockville Bible Church bought a 30,000-square-foot warehouse owned by Solano Works - an organization dedicated to job training for the mentally handicapped - and leased half of the space back to them.

"Services were full the first day here," Carson said. "God has really been blessing us as a church."

His next project is the establishment of a Christian school at the church. Preschool and kindergarten classes begin there next fall, and grades will be added on a yearly basis.

At last, it seems, Rockville Bible has found a home.

Carson reflected on this home - and his role in it - as he gazed out his office window.

It's a view that overlooks fields similar to that at Rockville Corners, to his church's beginning.

"I know my tenure here will be done at some point," he said. "I have to finish my ministry here and pass it on to someone else. It's incredible what God does, incorporates here."

"I wouldn't trade places with anybody."

Copy Story to Production

Super springs

Tolenas area once boasted spa with much-touted healing waters

(Editor's note: This is one in an occasional series of articles delving into Solano County's past.)

By Ian Thompson

Daily Republic Staff Writer

FAIRFIELD — Like much of Solano County's history, the Tolenas Soda Springs and the small-bottled-soda-water-market it created now lie mostly forgotten.

Located not far from present-day Fairfield, the springs were once a gathering spot for Solano County's health-conscious residents. Touted by doctors as healing, its bottled water sold well.

Long-time county residents say nothing remains of the building which housed the spa. The springs themselves are also said to be almost or completely gone. The site is private property, and trespassing of any sort is illegal and strictly forbidden.

More than a century ago, the Suisuni Indians used the springs as a natural spa, calling it the "Land of Healing Waters." After they were gone, local settlers took over.

Thomas M. Swan, a lawyer from Harden County, Ken., developed the springs.

Swan came to Benicia in January 1851 after passing over the Isthmus of Panama. He quickly carved out a career in his new home.

In his first year here, he became Solano County's district attorney and, by 1853, county judge. In 1855 and again in 1859, he was elected to the state Legislature.

He moved to Fairfield on May 9, 1858, buying the springs and developing a small spa.

At the time, the county's most



commercial spring spa was located near Vallejo. An 1877 atlas of the county called it the only one "of commercial importance, while there are some other minor mineral and soda springs elsewhere in the county."

Two years later, Tolenas Springs got its first mention in Hutchings' California Journal.

J.A. Rankin said the springs are "amidst the most beautiful and romantic of scenery," with vistas of Mount Diablo to the south and the Sierra Nevada to the east.

Rankin said he found several springs upon reaching the glen, the most considerable being Empire Spring, followed by White Sulphur, Seltzer and Congress Springs, as well as lesser ones.

On Empire: "This spring furnishes a considerable volume of water, that issues as a jet, with a gurgling noise at intervals of one to two seconds," evidence of carbonic acid. Congress, a short distance from Empire, sent forth the same water, but with less force.

White Sulphur Spring was smaller and had a slight flow, but Rankin said it was "highly impregnated with sulphur, the smell of which is perceptible for some distance."



DR Photo by Gary Goldsmith



Above: this artist's rendition, published in Hutchings' California Magazine, shows what the small spa looked like in 1860. Right: one of the surviving bottles from Tolenas Soda Springs.

Rankin said Seltzer Spring, on the west side, was the best. "Its pellucid and sparkling waters are equal in taste to the best soda water ever drank, eclipsing, in flavor at least, the more celebrated Congress and Empire," he said.

In 1860, the California Mercantile Journal said the springs were "possessed of remedial virtues superior to any of the other vaunted waters of California and equal to any in the world."

That was good enough for Swan, who worked on developing the area for the next 20 years. Most of his customers were local residents.

The spring water was bottled as Tolenas Soda Springs and sold

statewide, mainly in the San Francisco Bay area. It reportedly held its own against other brands.

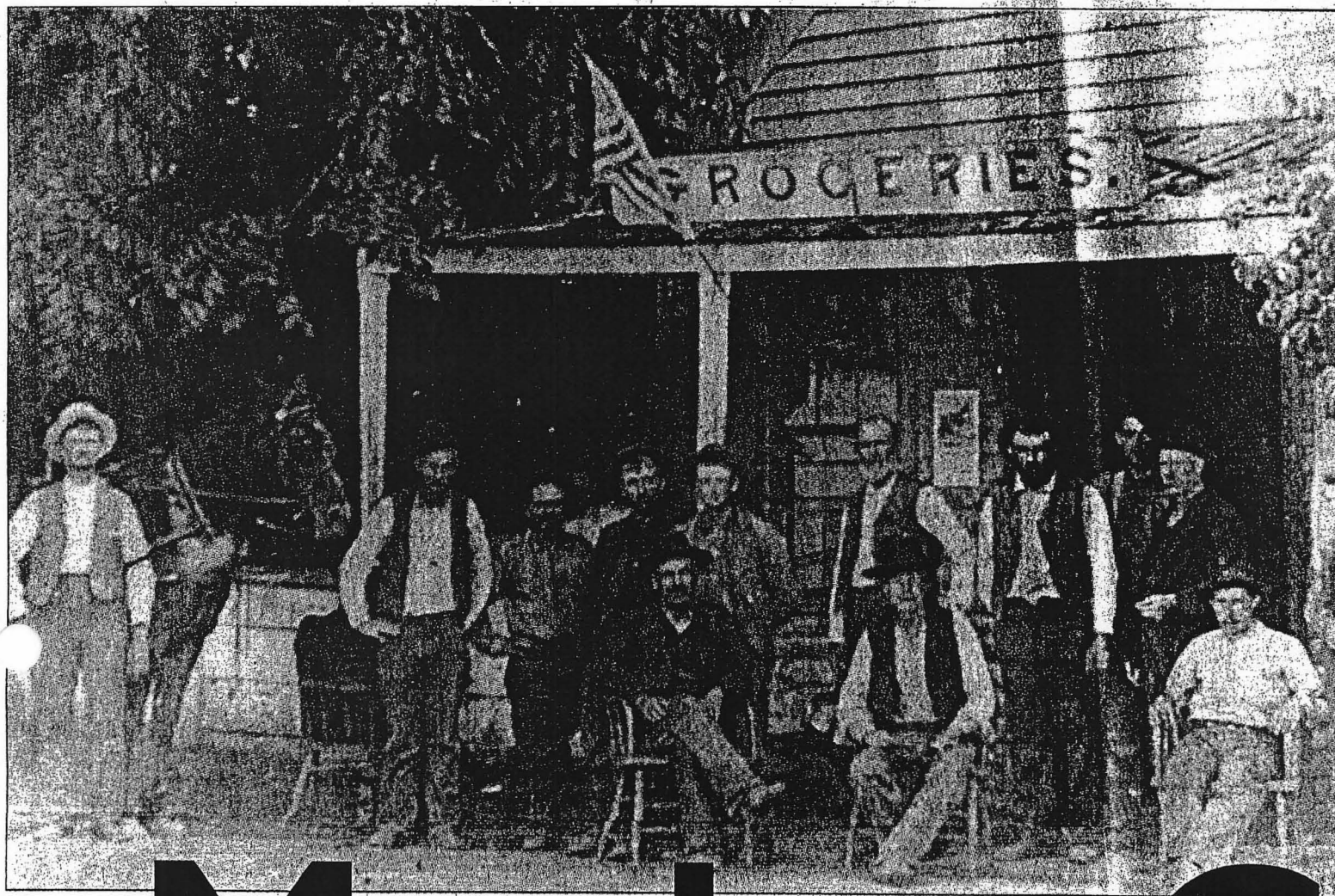
The product was popular until 1905. After then the brand slowly slid into history — why is unclear — and the spa was abandoned.

A quarry located downhill from the spa also produced clear, textured white onyx with light yellow veins. The polished onyx, used in the 1880s for ornamental clocks, was also shipped to San Francisco and Vermont to become mantels, vases and tabletops.

When those markets declined, the quarry was used for a while to supply crushed white rock for garden patios and roofs.

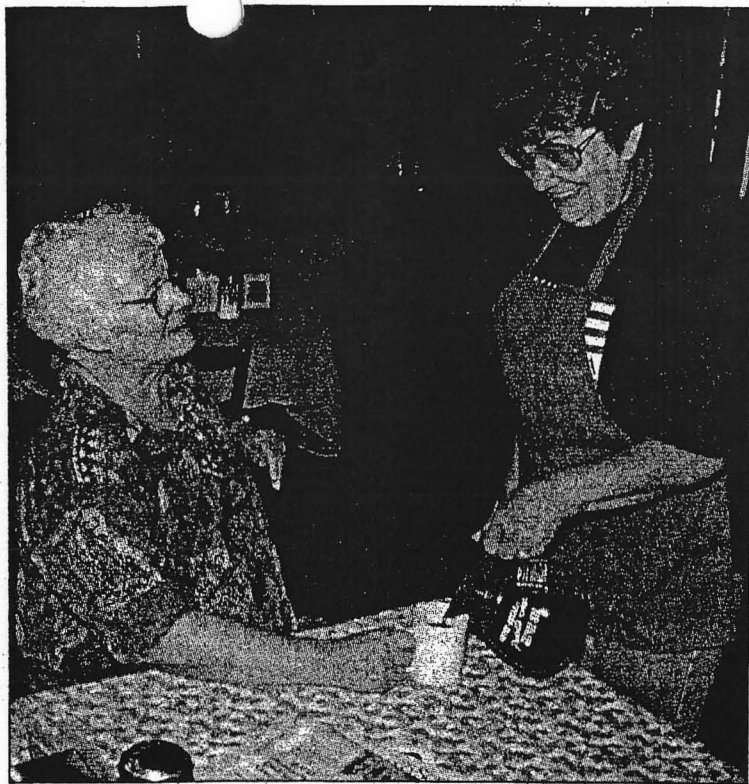
The quarry has also been abandoned.

From a hub . . .



Mankas Corner

An old photo
of Mankas
Corner
estimated to
have been
taken in the
early 1900s.



Jeanette Laub, right, sweeps the front porch of Mankas Corner. Below, Owner Mary Blake serves up some coffee to customer Adele Beaird.

... to a bump in the road

by Barry Eberling
DAILY REPUBLIC

MANKAS CORNER — Christley Manka would recognize this rural commercial crossroads in Suisun valley if he were alive today.

The dirt road is paved now and a handful of new buildings have sprung up since the 1850s. But Mankas Corner remains a breath of fresh country air in fast-growing central Solano County.

Manka was a '49er, trekking across the plains to seek his fortune in the mines at Yuba creek and the upper Yuba. He ended up in Suisun Valley, where he started a tavern.

These days, Duane and Mary Blake provide the food and drink at Mankas Corner as well as history stories of their century-old building and its place among rural Gordon and Suisun valley residents. "It was like a general little meeting

place up here," Mary Blake said recently as she sat at a table in her Mankas Corner restaurant. "Upstairs, they used to have dancing."

Boxing matches and religious meetings as well, Duane Blake added.

Resident Marvin Jones remembers those days well. He grew up in Gordon Valley during the 1930s and his uncles had their businesses in the building now owned by the Blakes.

Uncle George ran the store, Uncle Bill ran the bar and Uncle Presley was the barber. People pumped their own gas at the lone pump outside the store.

Back then, 30 minutes might pass before someone drove along the rural roads and a man named Ben Reams repaired Model T's and Model A's at Mankas Corner.

"He could strike a match on the palm of his hands, his hands were so rough," Jones said.

Farmers streamed to Mankas Corner to get a beer, play cards and dice and fight each other in the upstairs boxing matches.

"On the weekend, you couldn't get within a quarter mile of either side of that corner there," Jones said. "There were cars up and down both sides of the street. Everyone had a good time."

"The attraction, I don't know what was there," he added. "Just the community gathering, I suppose."

Uncle George quit running the store in the 1950s and took up farming in Wooden Valley. The second floor is now gone because of some remodeling project.

And the old days at Mankas Corner and Gordon Valley live on mainly in Jones' memory. He lies in bed sometimes and reminisces about them.

The Blakes bought the Mankas Corner restaurant 14 years ago, plus the house next door where they live. They had no experience running a restaurant, but

decided to give it a try.

Mankas Corner is nothing slick. The restaurant looks like a place to drop by with friends for a leisurely chat over some food, as inviting as the building's long front porch on a hot summer's day.

"This is really kind of old-fashioned and country style, where people come and sit and relax," Duane Blake said.

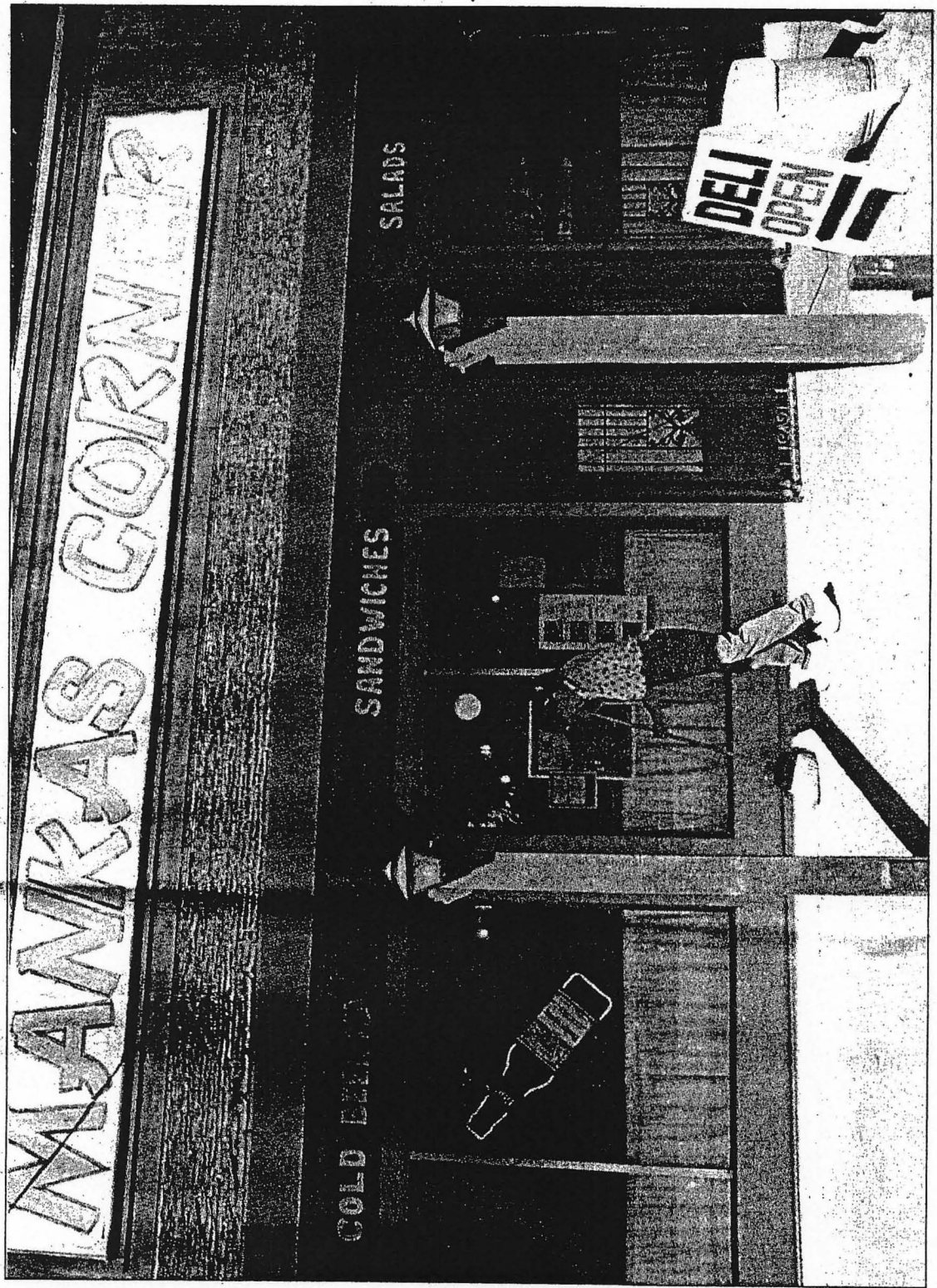
Among the decor inside is a wooden Indian, left there by one of the customers.

"He just thought, 'It looks so good, I'll leave it here. When I need it, I'll come and get it,'" Mary Blake said.

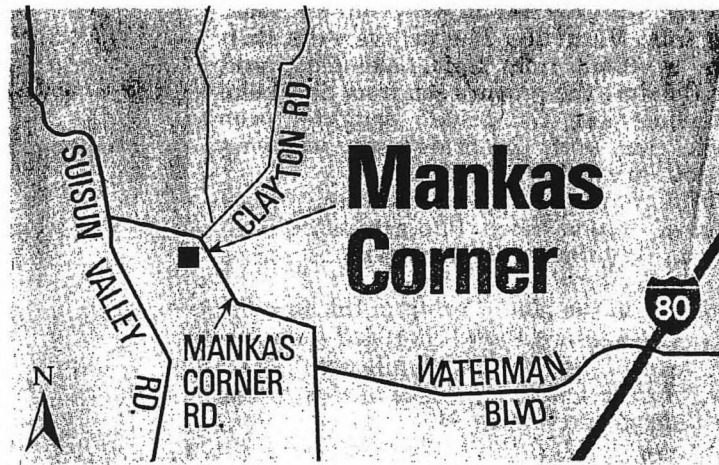
Nearby is a table with worn books, many of them romances.

"We started this and it's working," Mary Blake said. "People bring in their books, my regular customers. It's a swap thing."

Customers can rest assured the Blakes have no big remodeling plans. The couple



Gary Goldsmith/DAILY REPUBLIC PHOTOS



Mankas From Page E1

got complaints when they put in a new deli counter and some new tiling.

The Blakes originally didn't give people bills. Customers told the cashier what they had eaten.

"We had a complete honor system and complete honesty, but that's changed," Duane Blake said.

A few people leaving more drink cans at their tables than they reported to the cashier forced the Blakes to get a little stricter, but only a little. People can still go the tap and fill their own beer mugs.

The Blakes face some drawbacks by living next to their restaurant. People sometimes knock on their door after hours because they want a beer.

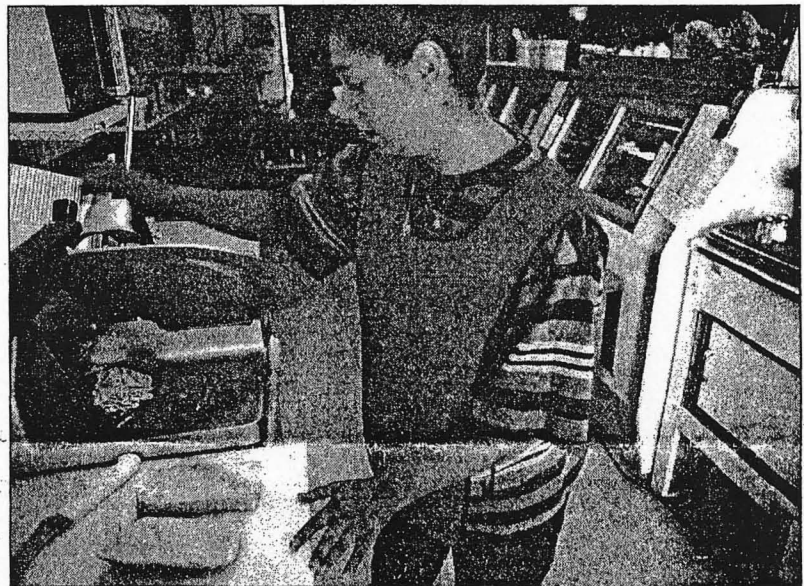
"Unlike most other places, we get up and come over and get it for them," said Duane Blake, who also manages the Suisun-Fairfield Cemetery District.

But the Blakes' days at Mankas Corners are numbered. They have a "For Sale" sign in front of the wild berries and ivy growing near their house and the restaurant.

"I'm going to be 60 and Mary's a couple of years behind so..." Duane Blake said, his sentence trailing off.

They may have a long goodbye. Duane Blake expects it will take a few years to sell the home and restaurant.

So, for now, people can go to Mankas Corners for sandwiches



Gary Goldsmith/DAILY REPUBLIC

Rosa Elias cuts up turkey for the lunch crowd at the deli.

such as the Buckaroo (featuring roast beef and Swiss cheese) and the WestWind (featuring turkey, jack cheese, guacamole and cranberry).

The rectangular wooden building next door houses a whole different world. The outside might look like Frontierland in Disneyland, but the inside is out of Architectural Digest, complete with shining kitchen counters and slick bathtubs.

This is Jim Fisher's showroom for Creative Interiors.

"I used to have a showroom downtown and I just wanted to kind of get out into the country and had the opportunity to buy

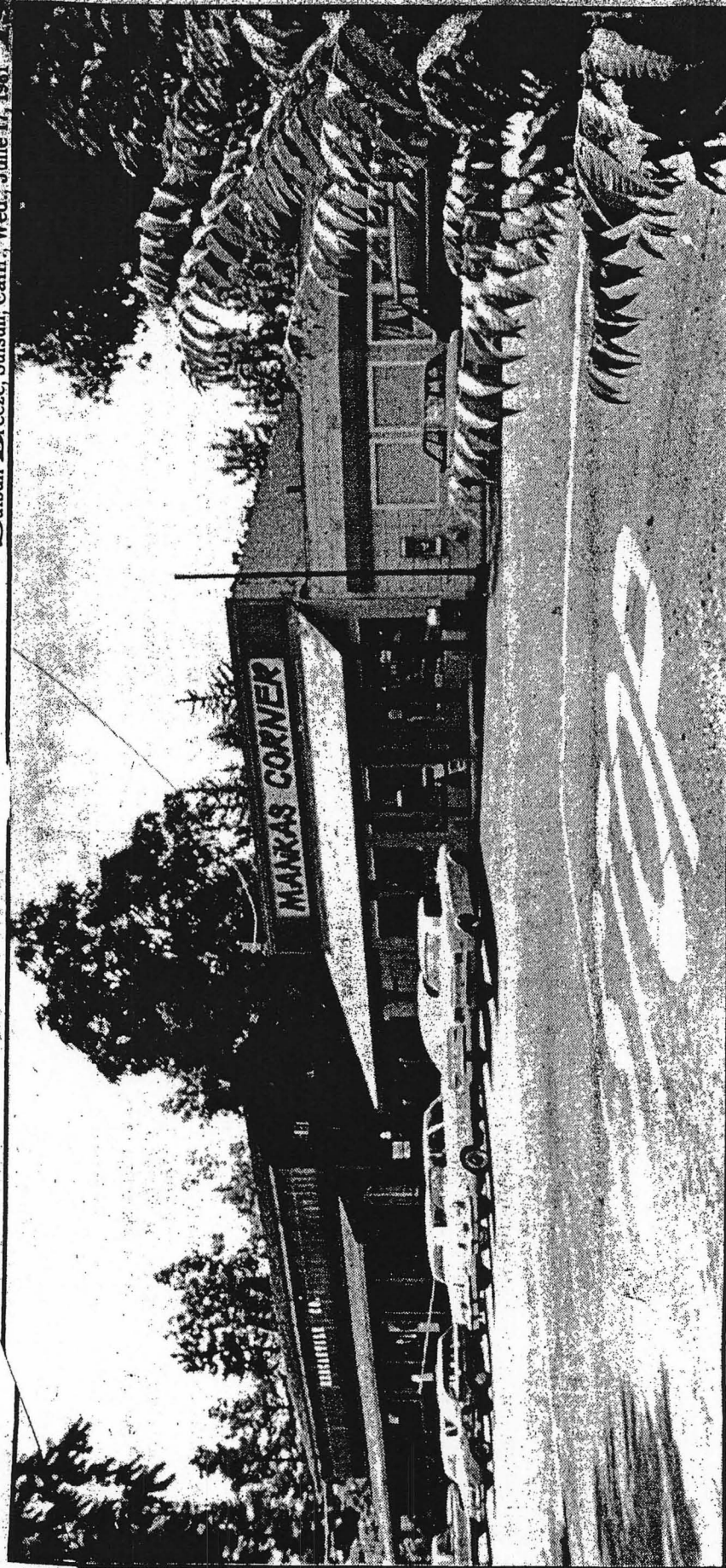
the building," Fisher said.

A lot of businesses wouldn't have the luxury to set up on a country road where the passing traffic is often tractors, trucks with bales of hay or boat-towing cars heading to Lake Berryessa.

"My business is at a point where I don't have to rely on walk-in traffic, though they're welcome to come in," Fisher said. "My business is more geared to past clients and referrals and things of that nature."

That gives Fisher the chance to revel in the rural atmosphere at a small commercial crossroads that seems worlds removed from the busy pace in Fairfield only a few miles away.

Suisun Breeze, Suisun, Calif., Wed., June 17, 1981 13



A popular crossroads ... Mankas Corner

BREEZE photo by Kevin W. Green

A landmark of the valley

By Kitty O'Neill

Not far from Suisun City, within the history-rich Suisun Valley, is a landmark more than 120 years old. Mankas Corner has been attracting weary travelers and curious sightseers since 1854.

Founded by Christley Manka, a Virginian who came out west to cash in on the California Gold Rush, the area was originally known as Manka's Corner. However, through the years the name was slurred until it became Mankas Corner.

Mankas Corner was established as a wayside bar and store for travelers passing through the valley.

Suisun City played a major role in keeping business alive as a steam flour mill located here kept an increase of traffic through Mankas Corner. In those days, the Berryessa Valley (now under water) was the wheat empire, and teamsters would haul the produce through the valley to San Francisco. The corner was the last stop in route to the Suisun Embarcadero where much wheat from the area was waterborne.

Manka never married, his first love apparently being his business and other financial interests. Upon his death, the estate was turned over to long time friend Jack Wolfeskill.

Since Manka's death in late 1888 his establishment has been home for many businesses, with several owners. John Wagner was the first to

purchase the establishment which became a regular post office from 1895 until 1902. Other owners included Ed Wilson of Vallejo, Charles Campbell and in 1905 Luke Milligan.

The latter replaced the original primitive structure with a two-story frame building; the upper floor was a dance hall where boxing matches were sometimes held.

In 1915 ownership once again changed hands this time with Peter Hoegan and Henry Christman at the helm, but with Prohibition in 1919, only the store survived as a rural convenience and neighborly meeting place.

Following Prohibition, the Jones Brothers bought the store and a barbershop was added. Many years ago, the second story was removed and an annex added, where a businessman made a vain effort to establish a sea food grotto.

Then in 1963 Peter and June Gilligan bought the structure and turned it into the present day delicatessen.

Today, Mankas Corner consists of the delicatessen, a trading post, hobby shop, old fashioned merchantile store, a plant boutique and a custom jewelry store.

Story's Trading Post run by Joann Story and Helen Darbison is located behind the delicatessen and shares the building with Hobby Horse partners Gerry Hannner and Joanne Hurley. Local artist Lellani Sanders is now offering classes in oil

painting from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Tuesday and Thursdays. All are welcome to attend.

Shirley Tanneyhill opened Mankas Corner Merchantile Co., three years ago. Currently four local women, Judi Nellson, Ber Veebaas, Carola Wickham and Joanne Wright rent space in the store. Here hand crafts, candles, handmade quilts, baby clothes and toys as well as plants, can be purchased.

The most recent addition to the corner is the Gift Galleria owned by Dee and Mickey Spier. Although only partially complete, the structure now boasts a custom jewelry store run by Spier and the Plant Boutique run by Madaline Leavy.

"We've really enjoyed being in business here," June Gilligan said. "It's a treat to meet so many people from all over the country. We're becoming a regular tourist spot."

According to Gilligan, lunch at the delicatessen, which features sandwiches, salads, homemade pies and pasties, has become part of a package deal for visitors taking the Anheuser Busch Brewery tour.

Mankas Corner was and is a vital part of the county. It flourished during the days when Solano had such communities as Maine Prairie, Denverton, Batavia, Collinsville, Binghampton, Fremont and Silveyville. These are gone, but Mankas Corner, like the pioneers who first farmed it, remains a proud segment of Solano County.

Mankas Corner's history filled in

With his permission, I am using the following letter from Richard W. Jones, commander, U.S. Navy, retired. It is interesting, very well written and adds to the history of Suisun Valley. He lives in San Diego.

A dear friend, Elaine 'Babe' (Serpas) Smith, sent me page C8 of the Sept. 24 Daily Republic with your column about Mankas Corner. I read the article with interest, amusement, and fond memories and especially appreciated the history of Christley Manka, which I had not known.

I am the last of the Joneses that lived at Mankas Corner until mid-1946, when I graduated from Armijo High School. My father, Presley G. Jones, was the barber you mentioned in the article. My uncles, William M. Jones and George W. Jones were the proprietors of the store/bar. Also living there were my younger brother, George R. Jones (Armijo class of '49) and my cousin, George H. Scally Jr. (Armijo class of '46).

In the depression years of the '30s and the war years of the '40s, Mankas Corner filled a societal need like the good music of the big bands and Roosevelt's fireside chats, although on a smaller scale. It served the local rural area with entertainment and a togetherness that is rare these days. There were no homeless; people took care of each other without government help or involvement.

The mechanical repair needs were cared to, too. The blacksmith shop of Calvin Ubanis "Baney" Reams kept all those old pre-war trucks (Model T's, Stars, Reos and whatever) running through the war to carry orchard and vineyard harvests to packers and canneries.

I think he also witched 95 percent of all the water wells in Suisun Valley. He rolled Bull Durham cigarettes with one hand and lit them with kitchen matches which he struck on the calouses in the palm of his hand.

And you're right, he did experiment with music-making devices. He could make the sweetest music in the county come out of a cross-cut hand saw. "Mexicali Rose" was one of his best performances.

A summer Sunday at Mankas Corner was a three-unit college course in the humanities. The



B Hancock

local area was the general home of many agricultural workers and their families who came there from the dust bowl of the southwestern states. And there were many Mexican nationals who were in the U.S. to help with the agricultural work.

This was a colorful population mix on a hot Sunday afternoon, what with the music, dancing and yodeling, and not a bit of it professional! There were the local natives with names such as Kee Fun, Tom Joyce, Lucky Fong, "Judge" Wolf-skill, John Meyers, Henry Homer McQuiddy and more Reams family names than I can remember.

Yes, the old store-building had an upstairs. It was used for assorted events. There were some mattresses on the floor for a boxing ring. Dick Macy tried to teach me how to box up there, but I didn't learn.

One Sunday in the early '40s there was a boxing match between Ralph Figarri and a fellow named Mullinax. I don't remember who won the fight. As I look back on the event, I wonder how the floor held up under the crowd in attendance. Needless to say, it was probably a beer sell-out downstairs.

A summer Sunday at Mankas Corner had to be seen, especially through the eyes of a teenager.

Thank you for the article. It presented a piece of Americana with an update and brought back some refreshing memories.

I wish the current owners of the Mankas Corner Deli, Mary and Duane Harris, success and enjoyment.

B. Hancock is the wife of a former Daily Republic publisher.



Photos by Michael Coleman

Historic Ramsey House in Green Valley was built by Charles Ramsey in 1860 with Gold Rush profits. The

house has been repaired, but living in it is not to the taste of current owners Billy and Betty Maher.

Where llamas roam

Guests at estate
meet menagerie

By Suzette Parmley

Daily Republic Correspondent

GREEN VALLEY — Billy and Betty Maher have opened the gates of their 151-acre Green Valley estate to enable Solano County youngsters to experience the countryside and its many pleasures.

For nine years, the Mahers have sponsored free tours of their estate, which includes a 127-year-old mansion, ranch and bevy of animals. Last year, the couple gave 17 tours between May 1 and mid-June to preschoolers, kindergartners and first-graders from the Vacaville, Vallejo and Benicia school districts.

"Kids really love coming here to see the assortment of animals," Mrs. Maher said. "Most have never seen the countryside and have never seen a cow or heard a calf moo before.

"It's really something seeing their reaction," she said.

The Mahers started their menagerie in 1976, and it now includes chickens, cows, horses, llamas, goats, swans, birds and a donkey. They had buffalo until last summer.

With the animals usually being bigger than the guests, Mrs. Maher has had to stay on her toes during the tours.

"When the kids are here, you always have to be on guard," she said. "They're apt to put their fingers in a horse's mouth, or they have to be told how to do certain things.

"I have to put a halter on the llamas and tell the kids not to touch their head and legs," she continued. "Sometimes the llamas bow down and smell the kids,

and the kids freak out."

Mrs. Maher herself feels a certain tingle seeing the children with the animals.

"It's really surprising that kids are thrilled by little, simple things, like petting baby kittens in the barn," she said.

The Mahers care for the numerous animals alone. They claim it is a very time-consuming, but pleasurable, task that serves as a reflection of their childhood. Betty was raised on a farm in Arkansas and Billy on one in Missouri.

"Sure, there's a lot of things to do," Mrs. Maher said. "When I was young, I had to milk the cows and feed the chickens, but this is different. This was our choice and we enjoy it so much, we don't consider feeding and caring for the animals as chores."

During a tour of the estate, one can also get a glimpse of the mansion, which itself has quite a history.

It was built in 1860 by Pennsylvania native Charles Ramsey. It is believed Ramsey had headed to California during the Gold Rush and had struck it rich. His wife lived in the mansion until 1894, when ownership shifted to the Nightingale family. The grandchildren became heirs to the 1,000-acre estate, which was an active farm, and they used the house as a weekend retreat until 1977.

The Mahers bought 80 acres of the land in September 1975 and built a house and barn on it. They then purchased an additional 101 acres in March 1977 that included the mansion and bunkhouse, 80 acres of pear trees and a walnut grove.

When they bought the property, Andy Tirau, who had been foreman at the ranch since 1927, introduced them

See Estate, Page 5

Estate

From Page 4

to the intricacies and idiosyncrasies of its operation. His widow, Connie, still lives nearby in the valley that has been her home for half a century.

For the Mahers, Jan. 2 marked the 12th anniversary of living at their estate. There are no longer pear trees, but the walnut grove still exists. And the Mahers have sold 30 acres of their land.

Although the mansion is situated just outside their back door, the couple decided not to live in it. The 5,000-square-foot mansion includes a basement, upper floor, attic and five fireplaces.

"We're not into antiques," said Mrs. Maher. "We have daughters that would love to live in it and shop every day to furnish it, but not us."

"When we bought the acreage in 1977, we had the option to buy it but decided to live in the house we had built (two years earlier)," she said. "Plus, I don't like the mansion's steep stairs, and it has no modern electricity and heating."

Instead, the mansion — called the Ramsey House after its builder — has been the site of Republican fund-raisers, family picnics and weddings.

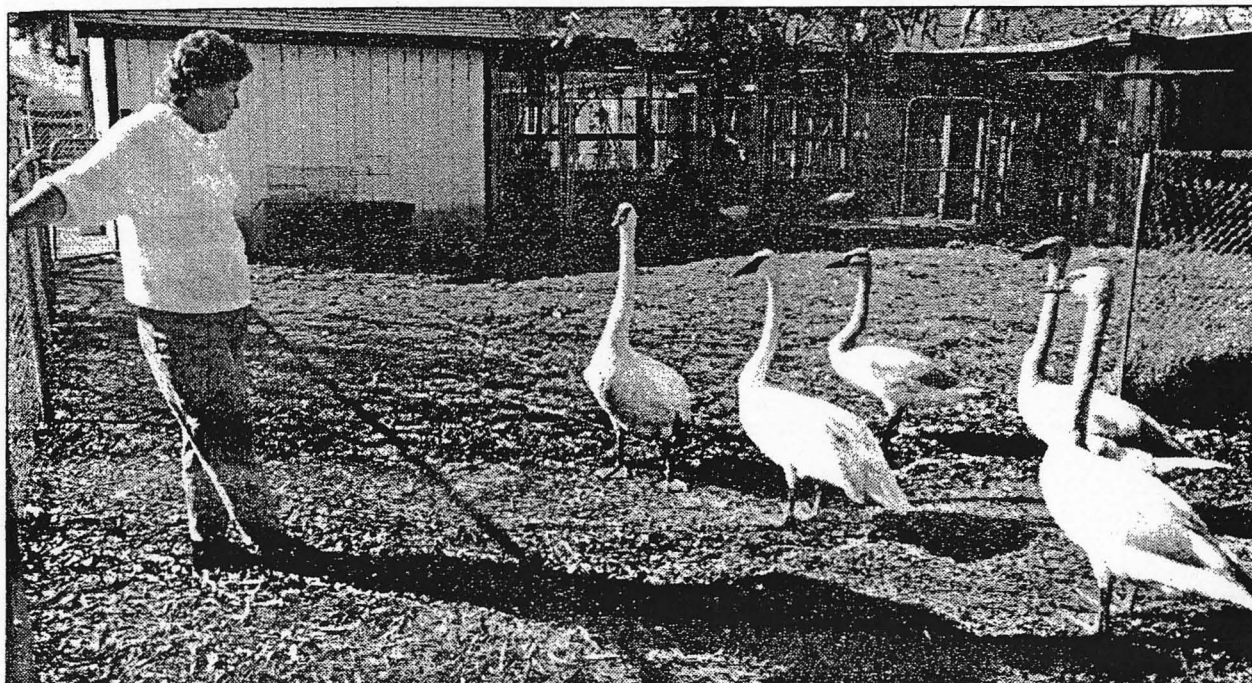
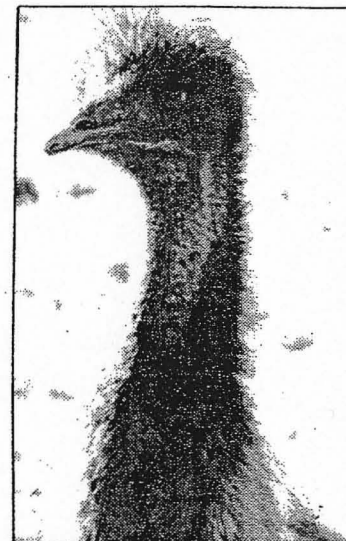
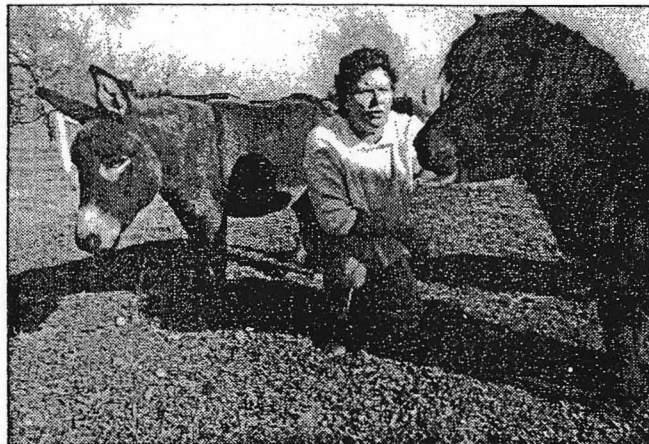
"During the tours, everyone is interested in the mansion," she said. "The kids are not allowed inside because they usually don't walk but always run. They have their picnic out on the front lawn."

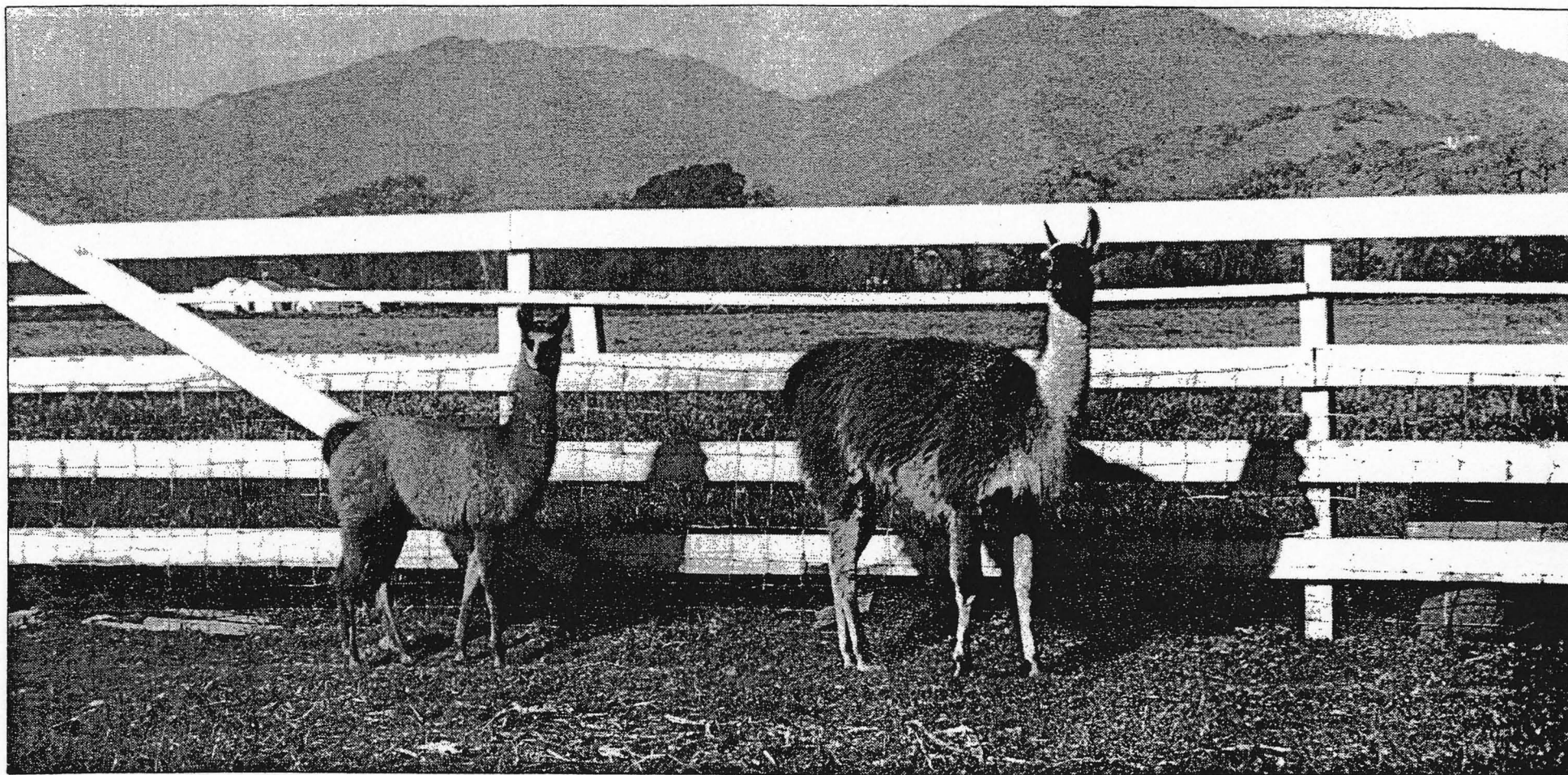
"But the mothers, who are usually the chaperones, are really fascinated by it," she said. "And most said they wouldn't mind living in it, even though it does need work."

And just having the opportunity to share nature's wealth is the best part of the visits.

"I'm really proud of what we have here," she said. "Even on bad days, I just like to go outside and see the animals. I think we have the best of both worlds out here."

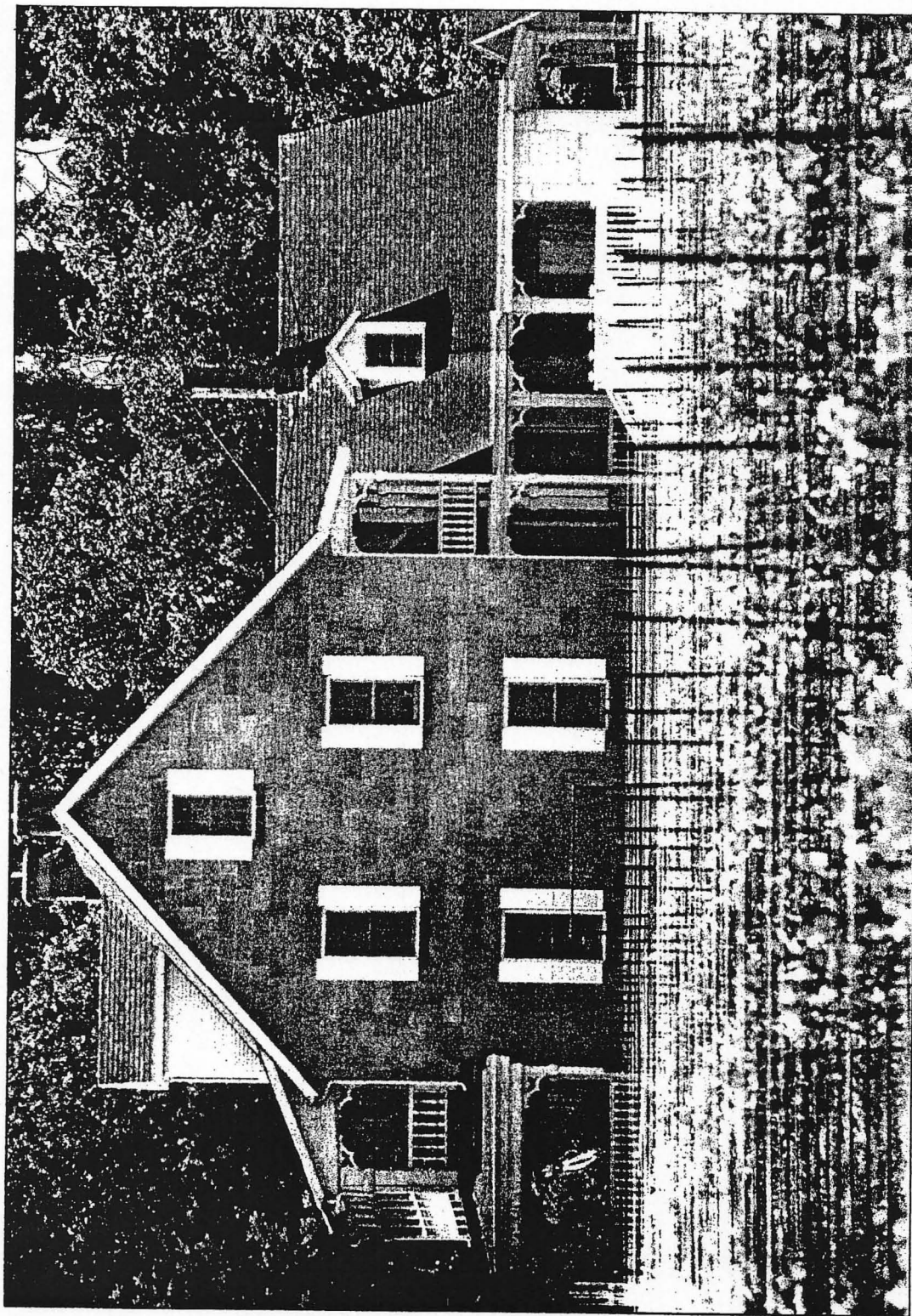
"When I'm out at the barn and look across the fields, I can see the highway traffic," Mrs. Maher said. "But it's so far away."





Among the friendly mammals and birds Betty Maher introduces to youngsters who visit her estate are a Sicilian donkey named Clementine, Toby the minihorse, an emu, a flock of North American trumpeter swans

and llamas. Children are fascinated by all the animals, and the closer they can get to them, the happier they are, says Betty Maher, who notes kids are thrilled by simple pleasures a visit to the country affords.



Judith Sagami/DAILY REPUBLIC PHOTOS

The Ramsey-Nightengale House, built in 1860, sits behind a grape vineyard on Green Valley Road.

Stone homes tell Solano history

By Ian Thompson
DAILY REPUBLIC

SUISUN VALLEY — Sturdy. That's how Beverly LeMasters describes her three-story stone house.

The house is built of carved stone blocks, 30 inches long and 10 inches thick, that have withstood more than 130 years of Green Valley weather with only slight nicks and an occasional groove "from a bullet when Unionists shot at the house when the residents flew a southern flag," LeMasters said.

"I am not sure how true that is, but it makes an interesting story," LeMasters said.

The restored home, built in 1860 by Solano County pioneer Charles Ramsey, is one of a half dozen such stone structures in the Suisun and Green valleys that were built in the late 1850s and early 1860s.

Found nowhere else in the county, many of the buildings were built literally within a stone's throw of the tufa quarries around Rockville, according to local historian Clyde Low.

The buildings — a chapel, two homes, a horse barn, ruins and a country club headquarters — are a historical snapshot of the early years of Solano County.

They were built of fine-grain tuff, or tuffa rock — a

Rockville's name comes from the quarries that were in operation from the 1850s through the 1870s.

form of compacted volcanic ash — which was very easy to quarry and found in the hills that separate Suisun Valley and Green Valley.

Stone was preferred over wood because it was so near at hand and the nearest stands of decent timber were in the upper Napa Valley, according to Low.

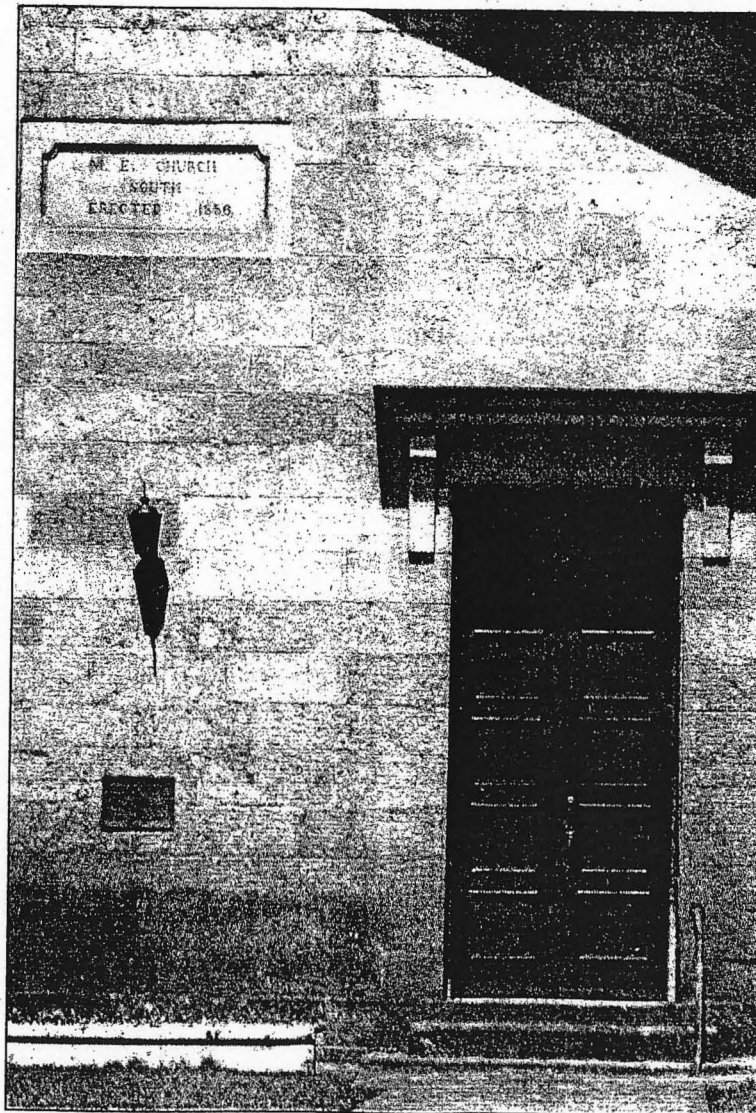
The stone also helps make summers livable.

"During the summertime, it's very cool due to the stone. We have rarely had to turn on our air conditioning," LeMasters said. "In the winter, it's hard to heat."

Rockville's name comes from the quarries that were in operation from the 1850s through the 1870s. The stone was shipped out by bay schooner through a wharf at Cordelia.

One of the abandoned quarries can still be seen by motorists on Rockville Road between Rockville and Green

See **Solano**, Back Page



The Rockville Chapel, built in 1956, is also made of stone, but 100 years later by the Episcopal Church.

Solano

From Page One

Valley. Another quarry on Nelson Hill was used until the mid-1980s.

The most well-known of the buildings is the Rockville Stone Chapel, which was built in 1956 by farmers who were part of the Methodist Episcopal Church South, a southern denomination that split off in 1845 over the issue of slavery.

The first burial in the cemetery next store was that of 3-year-old Sarah Alford in December 1856 whose parents, Landy and Sarah Alford, earlier donated the land the chapel was built on.

During the Civil War, the church's congregation was split when supporters of the Confederacy evicted those who supported the Union.

Regular services were held until 1895 and occasional services were held until 1919. After that, the chapel slowly became a ruin until 1940 when it was repaired as part of a federal work project.

A short distance north of the church is the boarded-up Baldwin Stone Barn with its carved stone horse's head. It was built in 1865 by J.M. Baldwin, a carpenter who came to California

from New York.

Baldwin tried mining in Amador County and working Placerville before he came to Suisun Valley in 1864 to ply his trade, according to Low.

A half mile east of Rockville Corners, just over Suisun Valley Creek and hidden in the middle of an orchard, are the ruins of the Barbour House which was built in 1859 by Nathan Barbour, son-in-law of Landy Alford.

Only its shell remains after it was gutted by an 1986 fire started by the burning of fruit tree clippings.

Another stone house, built by the Abernathy family in 1865, was also gutted by fire and dismantled in 1945.

The most imposing of the area's stone buildings is the Green Valley Country Club which was originally built in 1860 by Granville Swift, another '49er who made his money as a Feather River gold miner.

Across from Solano Community College is the Samuel Martin House. Nicknamed Stone-dene, the impressive Gothic Revival house was built by Solano County pioneer Samuel Martin in 1861.

Martin, a '49er, arrived in Solano County in 1850 when a small group of former Sonoma Mission Suisuni Indians were still farming the area for Suisun Rancho grant owner Mariano Vallejo.

Martin reportedly met Chief Solano when the American Indian was on his deathbed. He died within the year.

After Solano's death, Martin bought the farm site and moved the Suisuni farm workers and their families to Napa County.

In 1861, Martin hired a German builder and stone cutters to build the original home which is now the front side of the modified and expanded mansion, redesigned between 1926 and 1929.

It now serves as a developer's office building with two acres nearby slated to become a small historical park. The plans are under discussion between the landowner and Fairfield officials, Low said.

The only stone structure still a residence is the LeMasters' Ramsey-Nightingale House, which was built in 1860 by Ramsey who made his fortune on the American River after coming west from Pennsylvania

in 1849 with his family.

A large landholder and livestock rancher, Ramsey sold the house to John Nightingale in May 1894, whose family owned it until 1977 when it was sold to William Maher who bought the land and got the house by paying \$1 more.

It stood empty for a long time with its lawn used for parties, political fund-raisers and weddings.

"We renovated it and kept to the old style as much as possible," LeMaster said, adding the biggest change was adding patios around the outside. People see it from the road and stop in a lot. We even have people who want to take pictures of it."

By the mid-1860s, construction of stone houses ended.

Low is not sure why, but figures it was probably because the cheap labor supplied by Chinese and Irish immigrant laborers disappeared, swallowed up by the construction of railroads.

"The railroads came in during the late 1860s," Low said. "It could be the available labor supply changed. Chinese labor was used at the Martin site. This supply was taken away for work on the railroads."



STONEDENE, Suisun Valley Mansion built in 1861 by Samuel Martin in American Gothic Revival style of architecture, has been awarded national recognition by being listed in Washington, D.C., in the National Register of Historic Places as a federal landmark. Owners, Dr. and Mrs. Donald Curry are planning dedication

ceremonies Saturday, August 20, at 3 p.m., to which many dignitaries have been invited. Ceremonies will be conducted by Knox Mellon Historic Preservation coordinator of the Office of Historic Preservation in Sacramento. In addition, Mrs. Curry is an antique dealer and will be participating in the San Francisco

International Antique Show and Sale at the Sheraton Palace Hotel, four days beginning at 1 p.m., Thursday, August 25 and closing Sunday, August 28 at 6 p.m. Admission is a \$2 donation to United Voluntary Services at the door.

—DR Photo by Owens

Stonedene Dedication as National Landmark

As if arranging dedication ceremonies August 20, to commemorate the listing of their home, Stonedene, in the National Register of Historic Places in Washington, D.C. as a federal landmark, is not a large enough task, Dr. and Mrs. Donald L. Curry of Suisun Valley will be taking part in the antique circuit five days later at the San Francisco International Antique Show and Sale at the Sheraton Palace Hotel. The show, running for four days, August 25-28 will be a showcase for many of Stonedene's museum quality antiques.

Mrs. Curry shows the antique collection to prospective buyers by appointment and "as many come to view Stonedene as come to buy our antiques", she remarked. "But we don't mind. In fact, in September, the house will be open to the public for Intercommunity Hospital Guild's Antiques Tour."

The upcoming antique show, in the Grand and Gold Ballrooms of the Sheraton Palace Hotel, provides an elegant background for the magnificent pieces the Currys will be displaying and selling.

Kitty Curry's interest in furnishing Stonedene with heirlooms befitting the 25-room 10,500 square foot mansion, has flowered into a full-blown dealership for the Currys. They participate in the antique circuit every three months, for the benefit of the United Voluntary Services, an organization dedicated to providing volunteer hours and funds for veterans hospitals across the nation.

These two major events taking place in the same week in August, are taken in stride by Mrs. Curry. With the energy and enthusiasm of ten people, she manages her time very carefully, devoting herself to daughters, Kitty O'Hara, 6 and twins, Kimberly and Kelly, who soon will celebrate their first birthdays.

She also handles a demanding career as a staff research associate to her husband, who is associate

professor in the department of physiology at the School of Veterinary Medicine at UC Davis.

And her antique avocation turned vocation gives truth to the adage that if you want something accomplished, ask a busy person.

"Don spent many nights in the library researching the necessary data and compiling the statistics for the application for the National Register listing. He did the entire application by himself," beamed Mrs. Curry.

According to the Department of Parks and Recreation in Sacramento, only a small proportion of the homes and structures nominated for national recognition and prominence are actually accepted and included in the listing. Nomination does not automatically place a house in the register.

After nomination, the State Historical Preservation Resources Commission makes recommendations to the State Director of Parks and Recreation, who in turn, must approve the application. Final approval comes from the Keeper of the National Register of Historic Places in Washington, D.C. Besides offering tax relief, preservation for all time as a federal landmark is then assured. In California in 1976, only 92 landmarks were so designated.

"We're giving the dedication party to call attention to the fact that you can get into the National Register with a little effort and save historical homes such as Stonedene for future generations to enjoy. And an added bonus is the fact that not just anything can be built next to it. We are the first owners to make the house available to the public," Mrs. Curry continued "and we feel it is our civic contribution."

Invitations to the dedication have been mailed. From the office of Governor Edmund Brown Jr., Carlotta Mellon will represent the Governor.

The dedication will be conducted by Knox Mellon, Historic Preservation Coordinator of the Office of Historic Preservation in Sacramento.

Senator Alan Cranston, State Controller Ken Corey, State Senator John Dunlap, Assemblyman Vic Fazio, Representative Robert Leggett and County Supervisor Larry Asera are some of the dignitaries aiding in the honor for Stonedene on the guest list, as well as many others who helped secure the nomination and friends and neighbors of the Currys.

Meeting the stringent criteria of the National Register, Stonedene is rich in archeological, historical and architectural significance and is one of the largest and most imposing homes in Solano County and in fact in the Sacramento Valley.

A classic American Gothic Revival period lodging, Stonedene appears to have been plucked out of the nineteenth century and majestically placed stone by stone in the midst of a eucalyptus grove. Built in 1861 by Samuel Martin, added to and remodeled extensively by Julia Morgan (the architect of Hearst Castle in 1929), the three story home, with steeply pitched slate roof, gables and angles, conjures visions of movie sets and romantic gothic novels.

The mansion was built from native stone from a nearby quarry and from cream colored variegated Contra Costa County stone from across the Carquinez Straits. Martin hired a German stonemason to supervise the construction, but the actual labor was supplied by Chinese "coolies."

Even more remarkable is the fact that although the house reflects the sentimental and romantic thinking and architectural style prevalent in the Victorian period, Stonedene is a stone example of the Gothic Revival period. Stonemasonry was often translated into wood in that era and therefore, some of the stone tracery became wooden gingerbread. Not so with

Stonedene, whose name literally means valley of stones.

The grouping of the rooms inside actually determined the exterior aspect of the gables and angles.

The elegant rooms, with stippled plaster and beamed ceilings, bespeak of earlier opulence. Hallway arches, french windows, oak hardwood flooring, alcoves, niches, nooks and crannies give the home a warm, comfortable lived-in feeling, even though it is furnished with lavish period pieces. There are four baths and two half baths, with two of the showers containing seven shower heads. Each floor has a fire hose outlet, containing 50 feet of hose, with fire nozzles.

Two massive red lava rock fireplaces, two kitchens, a cellar with a wine room, rumpus room, utility room, workshop, library and solarium, besides a boiler room to house the radiator heating unit, make Stonedene truly unique.

The property consists of the main house, plus a detached four car, two story carriage house, on three and seven tenths acres of heavily wooded giant eucalyptus and ancient oaks. It boasts its own natural sparkling spring.

"Preserving some of the Indian remnants was instrumental in our desire to have Stonedene become a national landmark," commented Mrs. Curry. "It overlooks a portion of an Indian Village of the South Patwin Suisun Indian tribe. A grinding stone, with many indentations, attesting to prolonged use, is a few hundred feet from the back door."

Stonedene received a historical landmark designation in 1971 by the Native Sons of the Golden West.

"And now Stonedene has achieved national landmark status," Mrs. Curry added.

Busy as they are, the Currys are looking forward with happy anticipation to the weeks ahead, that will give Stonedene a permanent place in California's heritage.

The Samuel Martin Story Told

by Karin Kinney
DR Reporter

William Henry Martin Smith, previous owner of Stonedene, the 19th century house in Suisun Valley, now a federal landmark, made available historic photographs of his family.

His great-grandfather Samuel Martin, founder of the house, was born in 1813 in Pennsylvania. As a young man, he traveled west and settled in Indiana. In 1839, he married young Jemima Hillis and moved to Kentucky and later to Missouri.

News of the gold discovery drew them to California. Martin sold all his possessions and equipped with a team and provisions, he journeyed across the plains, with his wife and four children.

By fall of that year, they arrived at the Feather River and he began working in the mines. Although moderately successful, Martin considered it not the proper place for bringing up a family.

In the spring of 1850, he surveyed the land further south and arriving in Suisun Valley, he settled on a portion of land, adjoining that of Jesus

Molino of Rockville. It is said that the splendid growing grain of the Indians attracted him to the spot.

When the land subsequently was offered for sale in 1853, by the owners of the grant, he was the first settler to put a deed upon record as a purchaser.



HENRY Martin became the owner of Stonedene in 1885 when his pioneer father, Samuel Martin died.

—DR Photo by Kinney

Nonetheless, when squatters' troubles erupted, he was arrested along with the others as a turbulent squatter and taken to San Francisco. The mistake was discovered

quickly and he was released with ample apologies.

By 1860, Martin had become



SAMUEL Martin remodeled Stonedene in 1929 with the help of Julia Morgan, famous as architect of Hearst Castle.

—DR Photo by Kinney

a successful farmer. On a trip to Missouri, he purchased 660 head of cattle and with proceeds from the sale, began building Stonedene. He hired a German stonecutter and, with the help of "coolie" labor, the original three-story house with 13 rooms was constructed.

When Martin died at the age

of 74, his son Henry Martin, became the new owner of the stone house.

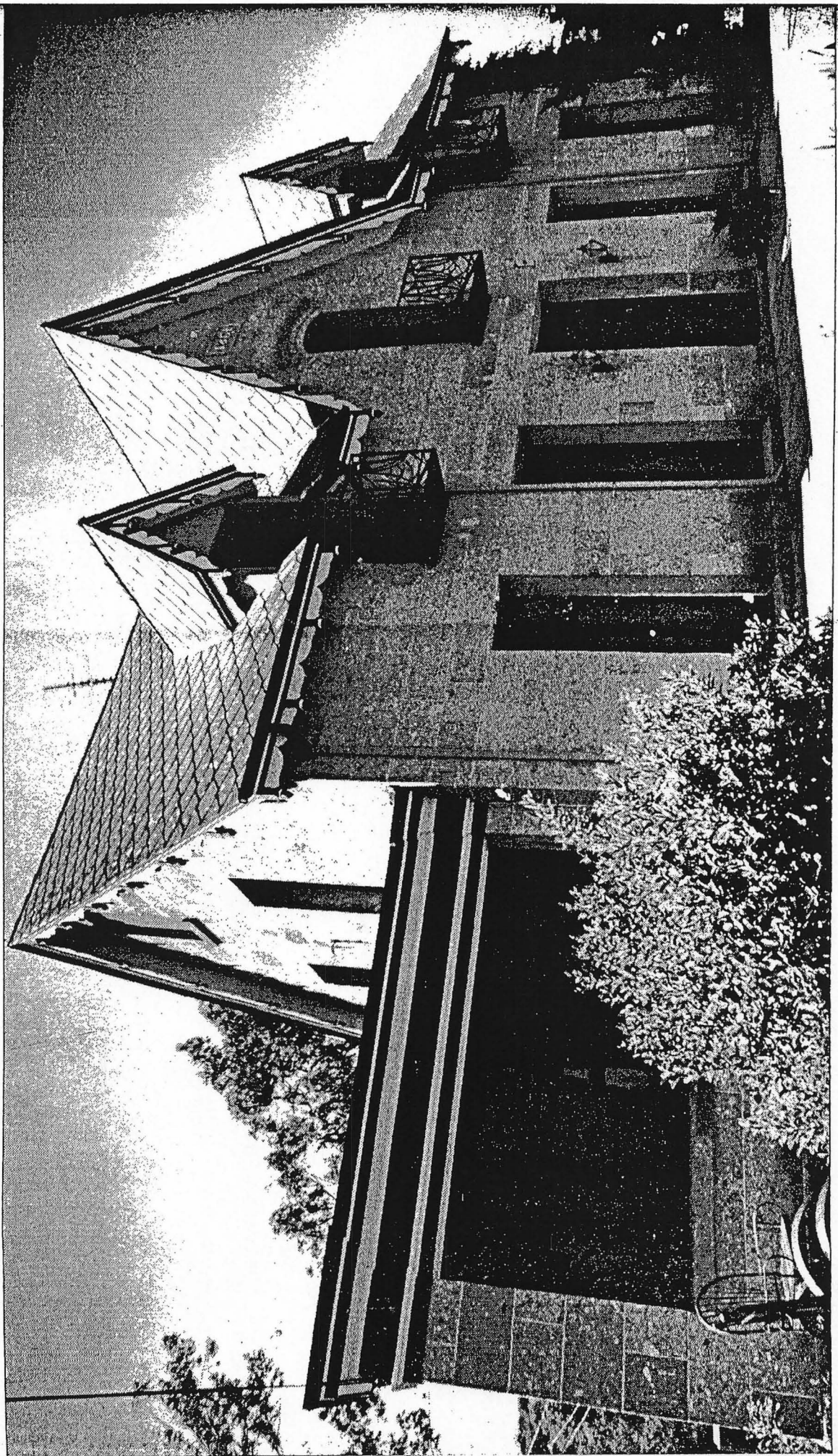
Henry's wife, the former Carrie Pittman, came from San Francisco to Cordelia, when it was still called Bridgeport. Her parents operated the Pittman Hotel, famous as a stage stop in the gold rush days. Located within three minutes walk from the train depot, the hotel also housed many hunters and people from the city, who rented horses and buggies for outings.

Their son, Samuel Martin, remodeled Stonedene in 1929, with the help of Julia Morgan, famous as architect of Hearst Castle. A rear wing was added, increasing the house to 25 rooms and a carriage house, in the same Gothic revival style, was built in the yard.

Samuel's sister, Mrs. William J. Smith, was the mother of Fairfield resident William Henry Martin Smith, the last descendant of Henry Martin, whose roots are deeply entrenched in the history of this county.

Daily Republic

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 8, 1967



By Ian Thompson
Daily Republic Staff Writer

FAIRFIELD — Financed by gold nuggets and made with readily accessible fine-grain volcanic rock, several stone mansions and farmhouses built more than a century ago have left lasting imprints in Solano County's valleys.

Most of this stone heritage still stands, tucked away in the Suisun and Green valleys, notes historian and Solano Community College librarian Clyde Low, who has visited all the buildings.

They also carry the story of the two valleys' 19th century pioneer and Civil War past.

Rockville Stone Chapel, located half a mile north of Rockville Corners, was built by the Methodist Episcopal Church South, a new church that split from the Episcopalian church in 1845 over the slavery issue.

The cornerstone was laid on Oct. 3, 1856, with the first services held that year on Christmas. The church replaced the circuit-riding ministers who had held services in farmers' homes.

Built of Greek revival design, the chapel has the stark simplicity shared by many frontier churches.

A small graveyard was put beside the chapel amid oak and locust trees. A tragic irony: the first burial in the cemetery was for the 3-year-old daughter of Sarah and Landy Alford, who donated the land for the chapel.

Others put to rest in the cemetery include Granville Swift, one of the famous Bear Flag rebels of 1846 and builder of the mansion now used by the Green Valley Country Club.

The Civil War split the church's congregation in 1863 when the Unionists angered the Southern sympathies of the rest of the congregation by singing "The Battle Hymn of the Republic" one Sunday, according to Low.

ROCK SOLID

County's stone heritage still stands

Southern supporters retaliated by putting a plaque over the door with the inscription "Methodist Episcopal Church — South," angering the Northerners and prompting them to leave. The congregation dwindled over the years and services finally stopped in 1895.

Now, the chapel is kept up by the Rockville Cemetery District and the Presbyterian Church holds services there.

Standing back from the road just north of the church is the Baldwin Stone Barn built in 1865 by J.M. Baldwin, a carpenter from New York who first tried his hand at gold mining only to settle in the Suisun Valley in 1864.

A finely carved horse's head over the barn's front entrance clearly shows its original use. The rest of the barn features well-cut stone and truncated wedge-shaped stones around three arched entrances.

Just across Suisun Valley Road from Solano Community College and down the road from Rockville Corners lies the best of the county's stone buildings — Stonedene. Built by Samuel Martin, it was restored by owners Donald and Kitty Curry in 1977.

Martin, one of the '49ers who passed through the county on their way to the gold fields, came back in 1850 when Chief Solano and the remnants of the Sonoma Mission Indians were farming the area under Gen. Mariano Vallejo.

Solano died that year, according to Low, allowing Martin to occupy and later buy the land, dispossessing the Indian workers and their families on it.

Martin hired a German builder and stonecutters to build the original three-

story Gothic revival structure, the front section of the present house, in 1861. The extension was added between 1926 and 1929 by architect Julia Morgan, the famed designer of San Simeon and many Mills College buildings.

"We almost lost Stonedene a year and a half ago to fire," Low said, of the grass fire that swept to within yards of the historic building.

The skeletal stone remains of the Barbour House still stand half a mile east of Rockville Corners just across Suisun Valley Creek.

The house was built in 1859 by Nathan Barbour, the son-in-law of Suisun Valley landowner Landy Alford. It was a beautiful Gothic-style home almost identical to Stonedene.

"Gold miner wealth is clearly in visible evidence here," Low said of the well-made house.

But on a windy May day last year, it shared the fate of another nearby stone house built by the Abernathy family in 1865, which was gutted by fire in 1945. Not a stone remains of the Abernathy House, which was dismantled shortly after the fire.

While the stones of the houses last centuries, Low said, the wood interiors and roofs are susceptible to fire. It was flying embers from a large slash burn that ignited the Barbour house's roof and destroyed it.

The lower two stories of the water-powered Dingley Flour Mill sits next to Green Valley Creek near the intersection of Rockville and Green Valley roads.

Builder George Dingley "was no gold miner, but a carpenter who simply used his

skills to collect a kitty" and erect the mill in 1853. It was originally a large structure, three stories high with a 40-foot overshot water wheel.

Dingley claimed the land first as a squatter and later as a speculator but was foreclosed in 1860. According to Low, it took five years to evict the tenacious Dingley, who "used every strategy that even included connivance with the sheriff."

In 1865, the new owners added steam power. In 1867, the mill burned under mysterious circumstances. Since then, the remaining two stories have been used for storage.

Pennsylvanian Charles Ramsay started the Ramsay-Nightingale House on the Maher ranch in Green Valley out of money he brought back from the Mother Lode country.

In this case, Ramsay pulled his fortune out of the American river gold fields in 1849 to become a large landowner and livestock rancher in Green Valley.

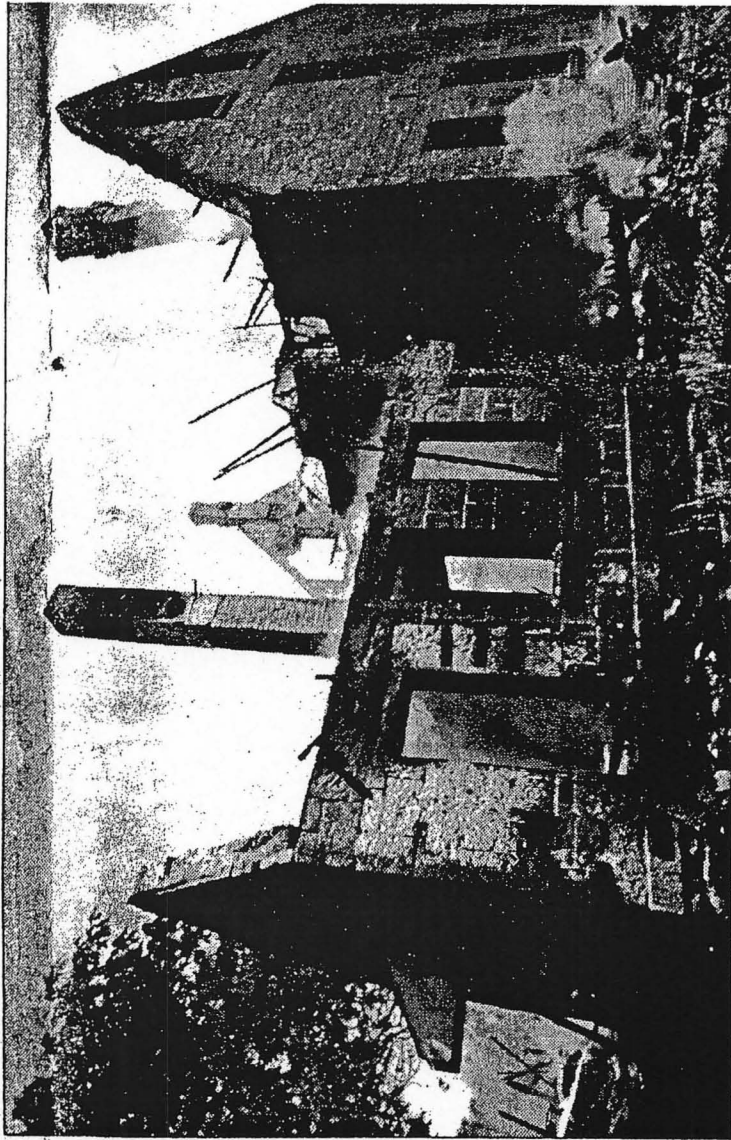
The Jones Mansion is the most imposing of the county's stone buildings and now houses the Green Valley Country Club. The three-story home was built by Swift in 1860, who also pulled his fortune out of the Feather River gold fields in 1848.

A divorce in Sonoma drove Swift to the upper reaches of Green Valley. He later moved back to Sonoma and in 1868 gave the mansion to his sister, Mary Swift Jones, wife of Frederick Sidney Jones Sr.

It was Frederick Jones Jr. who built the agricultural operation started by his father into one of the largest in the state. It reportedly had largest cherry grove in the world.

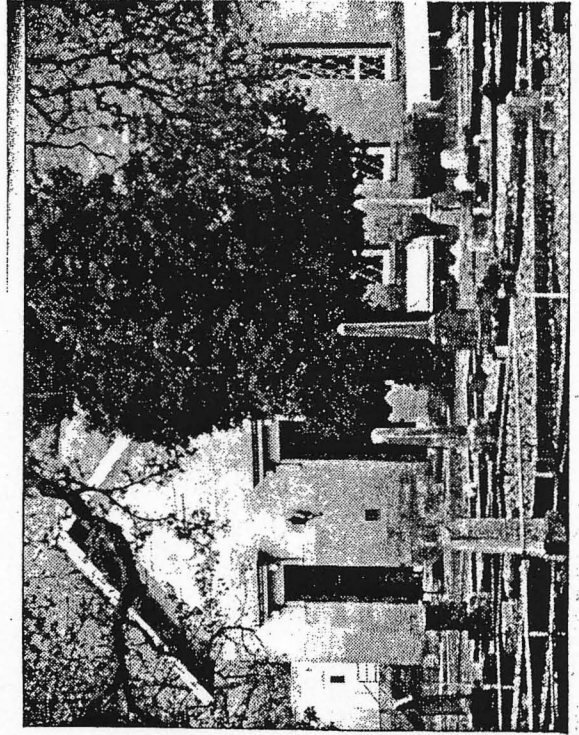
Only Stonedene is as well restored as the Jones Mansion.

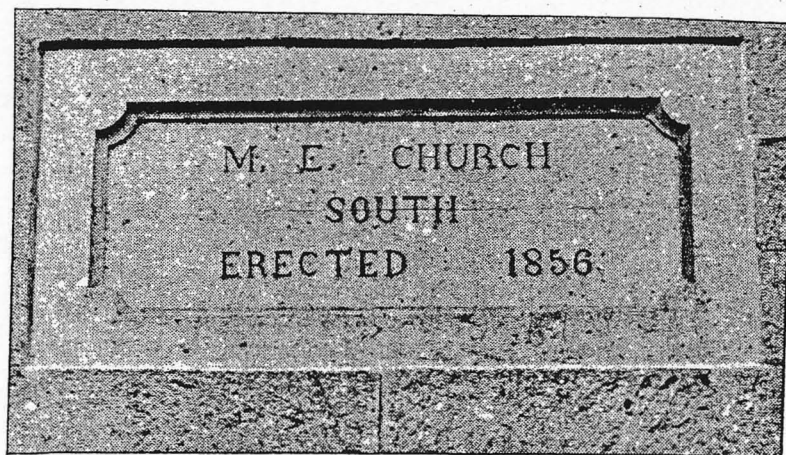
Few other areas in the state have such a large number of historic stone buildings. Gold brought many of these pioneers to California, but "it was the agricultural richness of the Green and Suisun Valleys that brought them here," Low said.



'Gold miner
wealth is clearly
in visible
evidence here'

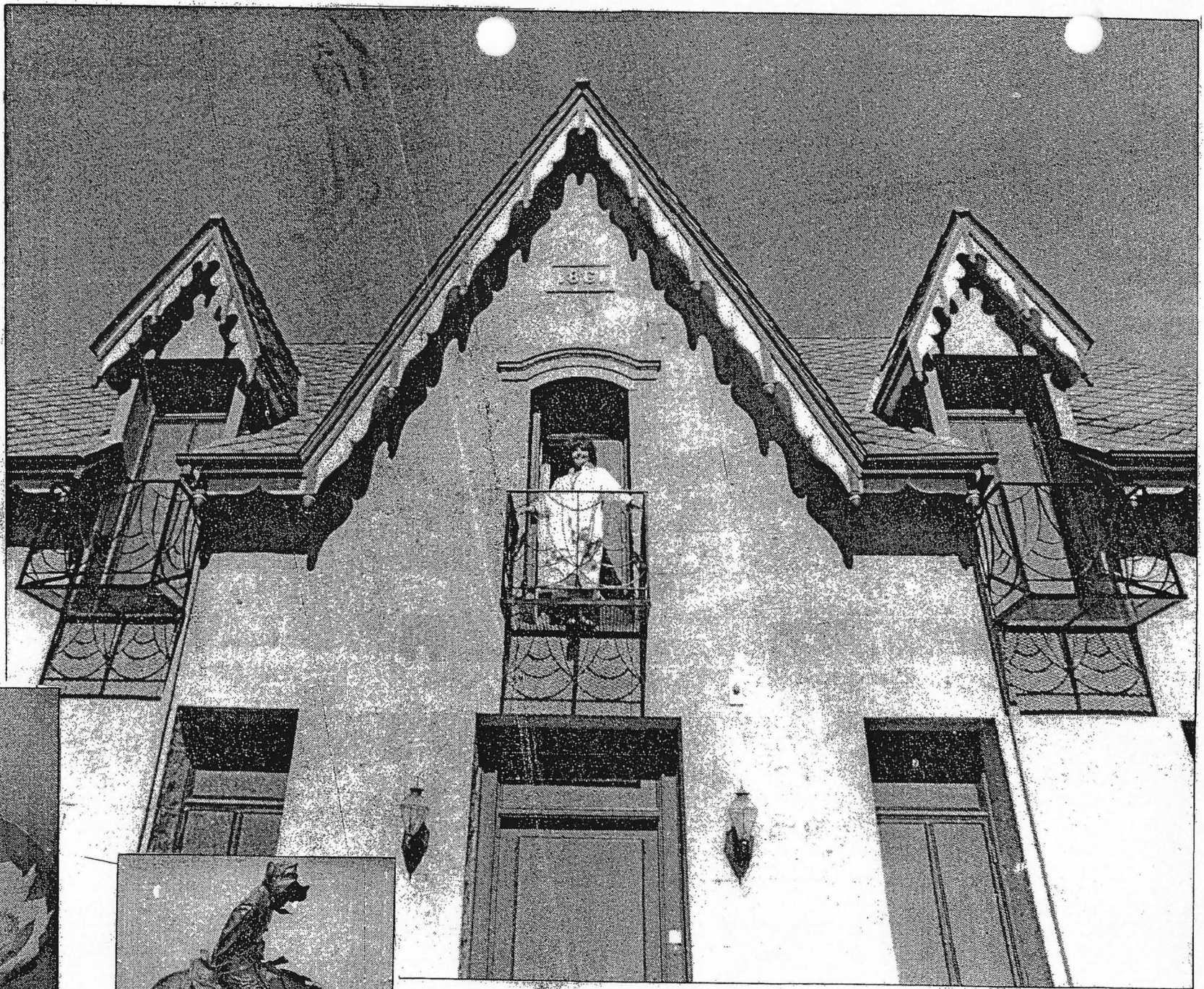
— Clyde Low,
local historian





Stonedene, which was restored in 1977, remains perhaps the most magnificent of Solano County's stone buildings (left and below left). The Rockville Stone Chapel has the stark simplicity shared by many frontier churches (below center). A finely carved horse's head over the entrance of Baldwin Stone Barn shows its original use (below right). The historic Barbour House was gutted by fire a year and a half ago (bottom left). The Methodist Episcopal Church South, a new church that split from the Episcopalian church in 1845 over the slavery issue, built Rockville Stone Chapel.

**DR Photos by
Mike Major**

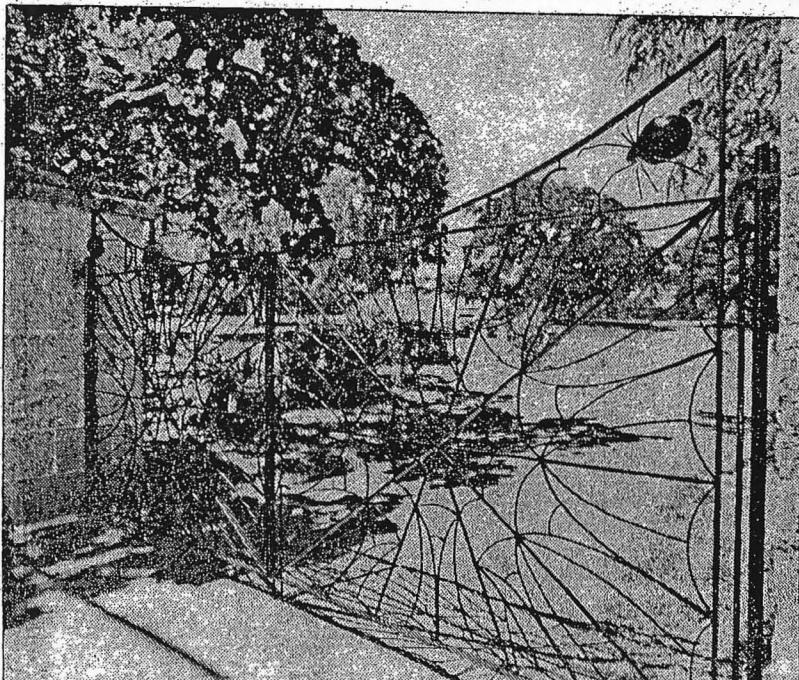


Be it ever
so humble ...



Above, Stonedene owner Kitty Curry steps out onto one of 10 wrought-iron balconies attached to the door-like windows on the mansion's second floor. At far left, an antique lamp lights up the main hallway on Stonedene's first level while an authentic Remington bronze cowboy, left, adorns an antique table in the dining room.

There's No Place Like Home



Stepping into the Curry's main living room, with its floor to ceiling stone fireplace, shown above, is like stepping back into time. The elegant drawing room is decorated in hues of cream, rose and powder blue. Its furnishings reflect the Victorian era. At left, a wrought-iron gate designed like a spider's web complete with spiders leads into the historical mansion.

DR Photos by Dudley Owens

By Ann Johnson
Daily Republic Staff Writer

ROCKVILLE — Stonedene, the Gothic Revival-style mansion that sits on 3½ acres of land off Suisun Valley Road, has been preserved once again, and remains a part of Solano County's heritage.

Nearly destroyed by fire last September, the Gothic Revival-style stone mansion with its three steeply pitched gables symmetrically placed on the main facade and its fine ornamental bargeboard has been totally refurbished by its present owners, Donald and Kitty Curry.

The 10,500-square-foot mansion, originally built in 1861 by Samuel Martin for \$1,000, boasts 25 rooms, is 50 feet high and 90 feet long. Though eight of its rooms are designed as bathrooms, only six are used that way, according to owner Kitty Curry.

Stonedene's four stories include a basement with a wine cellar, the first and second floor living areas and an attic.

The fire that swept the grounds of the stone mansion in September did more than \$80,000 worth of damage to the structure, which is listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

The Currys have spent more than \$150,000 to restore the damage caused by the arson-related blaze.

"It took 50 workers to complete the restoration," said Kitty, adding that the refurbishing efforts began immediately after the fire and were completed in May.

When the Currys purchased Stonedene in 1974, it was in deplorable condition.

"It had been vacant a while and bats, mice and birds had made it their home," Curry said, adding she spent her first night in the 125-year-old mansion "in fear." It was the Currys who applied to have Stonedene placed on the National Register of Historic Places. This feat was accomplished on May 26, 1977.

After they purchased Stonedene, the Currys had the interior painted in one tone, white. Since walls, windows and doors had to be completely knocked out and redone after the fire last September, the Currys decided to do more than just fix the immediate damage.

"I had the opportunity to completely restore the interior and add wrought-iron balconies for fire safety reasons," Kitty said, adding the Cordelia Fire District told the Currys they were lucky they were not trapped in the house when the fire broke out because it contained no fire escapes.

They added six wrought-iron balconies to the second story, and at the same time, decided they would like an ornate wrought-iron gate, something Kitty has always wanted.

The wrought-iron gate leading into Stonedene, designed in a "spider web" complete with spiders, was handmade by local metalworker Ted Basden.

The Currys decided to create a "Mediterranean-Mosque feeling" inside the home, which is furnished throughout with fine art and antiques that Kitty purchases as an art dealer.

"The house was originally intended to be Gothic outside and Mediterranean inside, and since we had to restore and repaint it, we decided to do it in warm tones of orange," Kitty said. "We chose one color and matched everything to that."

"And I just have to tell you that the thing that saved me was my painters. I couldn't have stood the restoration process without the painters. Billy White (painting contractor) saved my life. The painters did more than paint. They helped in many other areas. They became a part of my life, my family for nine months."

Stepping onto the grounds of Stonedene, with its age-old live oak, eucalyptus and evergreen trees, is like stepping back into time.

Franciscan missionaries lived on Stonedene's grounds before the huge mansion was ever conceived. One of the missionaries' converts, Chief Franciscan Solano, farmed the land upon which the stone mansion sits.

In 1842, he sold more than 200,000 acres of land to Gen. Don Mariano Guadalupe Vallejo for \$1,000. According to the original deed, the "property was bounded on the west by Rancho of Suscal and on the northeast by Tolene."

Vallejo sold much of the land of the "Suysun" Indians to Archibald A. Richie of Newcastle, Del., and Robert H. Waterman of Bridgeport, Conn.

Historical documents reveal that Jesus Molino, an Indian, was the overseer of Richie's property in the Rockville area.

In 1850, Pennsylvania native Samuel Martin arrived in the area and upon "seeing the splendid growing of Jesus Molino and another Indian at Rockville" decided to purchase land adjacent to Solano.

Martin became the first white settler to purchase and file a deed for land in the area in 1853. He paid \$3,000 for more than 200 acres of land. Martin lived on the land for nearly 35 years.

He hired a German architect and stonecutters to build Stonedene in 1861. According to historical documents, the stone came from a local rock quarry and the mansion and the stone wall surrounding its grounds was built with Chinese "coolie" labor. The laborers were paid a paltry sum of \$1 a month for their efforts.

When Samuel Martin died, he willed the property to Henry Martin, one of his five surviving children. Henry married Carrie Pitman of San Francisco, whose family reportedly owned the land that is now Market Street.

One of their children, Sam Martin attended the University of California-Berkeley where he befriended a distant relative, Genevieve Morgan. Morgan was the niece of California's first female architect, Julia Morgan.

Julia Morgan was engaged to enlarge and restore Stonedene in 1926. It took three years to complete the restoration since Morgan was also working on Hearst Castle at the time. Records place the restoration costs at \$20,000. The stonecutters were paid \$3 a day in 1929.

Cement: A Town That Lived Prospered. And Then Perished

(Unless they've listened intently to the tales spun by Fairfield Suisun oldtimers, sunrise worshippers who trekked up Cement Hill Sunday may not have realized they were standing on the site of what once was a booming city; Cement Hill. And quite a city it was, too. In the following story, the first of an historical series to appear in the Solano Republican under the title "Solano: The Way It Was," Toleno's correspondent Wilcen Campbell tells the story of Cement: a town that lived and died.)

By EILEEN CAMPBELL

Once it was a bustling, booming city of 500 citizens who found round the clock to dig a great treasure from Mother Earth.

Today, it is less than a ghost town. . . just a few crumbling foundations scattered here and there as testimony to what it was . . . and what it might have been.

This was Cement, a town with a curious name, a lively life, and a sudden death.

900 Acre Site

Cement covered 900 acres near a rise which today is called Cement Hill, northeast of the Fairfield city limits and northwest of Travis AFB.

It sprang to life about the turn of the century when owners of the Pacific Portland Cement company discovered a bonanza in rock and clay beneath the earth.

That launched a venture which lasted 26 years, and wrote a busy chapter in the history of Solano county and Fairfield-Suisun.

Cement industrialized rapidly after Pacific Portland Cement launched its mining operations.

Work Begins

Two large mills were erected and 500 men were hired. This in turn demanded housing, so cottages were built for company officials on one street, and foremen and other personnel rented homes on another.

Soon, other buildings were erected to serve the town: a post office, hospital, school, fire department, boarding house (for serving meals), bunk houses, a livery stable, grocery store, butcher shop, and a hotel.

Cement's first hotel was razed by fire and a second, more sumptuous hotel, erected in its place.

The company operated its own pastures where sheep, cattle, pigs and chicken were raised as a meat supply.

Horse and Buggy

The main means of transportation was horse and buggy and trains. Commuting to Fairfield and Suisun created a problem at first because trains came only as far as Toleno station (part of the buildings still remain.)

There were five passenger coaches which stopped daily, two of them westbound and three east bound. The trains carried supplies to the express office which were later transported to the warehouse.

This merchandise arrived from Sacramento or San Francisco.

This was known as the C.T. & T Railroad and at a later date

Western Pacific Railroad made available electric passenger cars to Suisun.

Entertainment, Too

But living in Cement wasn't all work. There was plenty of fun, too.

There were two annual affairs each year to which everyone looked forward. One was the annual ball in which all the ladies tried to outdo each other in glitter and fashion.

The other was an annual "Smoker" better known today as Prize Fights.

Thousands commuted to Cement Hill to attend this function.

Baseball games were held each week with mill teams competing.

Working conditions at first were rigid with the men working 12-hour shifts. This continued until President Wilson introduced the eight hour day, after which the mills began three shifts, 24 hours a day.

Good Pay

Men employed here were receiving good wages but the turnover was frequent due to the dust. Many could not stand the powder fine particles which clung to them, but the steady personnel found after the powder had once turned to cement and peeled off they were no longer bothered with this problem.

For these steady personnel a special award was given. When one had worked five years of continuous service, he received a service pin for each additional five years of service, received a diamond which was mounted on the pin. This not only helped build morale but served as an incentive.

Communication was made more readily available through the telephone lines which were installed.

Cost of Living

Living costs in Cement were comparatively low, considered

alongside those of today.

A three room apartment rented for \$12 a month, for instance and a family could get by on \$ a month for groceries.

But salaries were also low. An apprentice in 1910 earned \$1.75 a day; in 1927 he made a day.

At night, Cement's light could be seen for miles and one resident described it, "It's a million diamonds brilliant displaying their radiance."

But Cement's days were numbered.

One day, company officials learned the supply of rock was running low. Later they learned the deposits of clay, too, were nearly exhausted.

Company Sells Out

The end came in March, 1927 when Pacific Portland sold off its interests for \$100,000 and relocated in Redwood City.

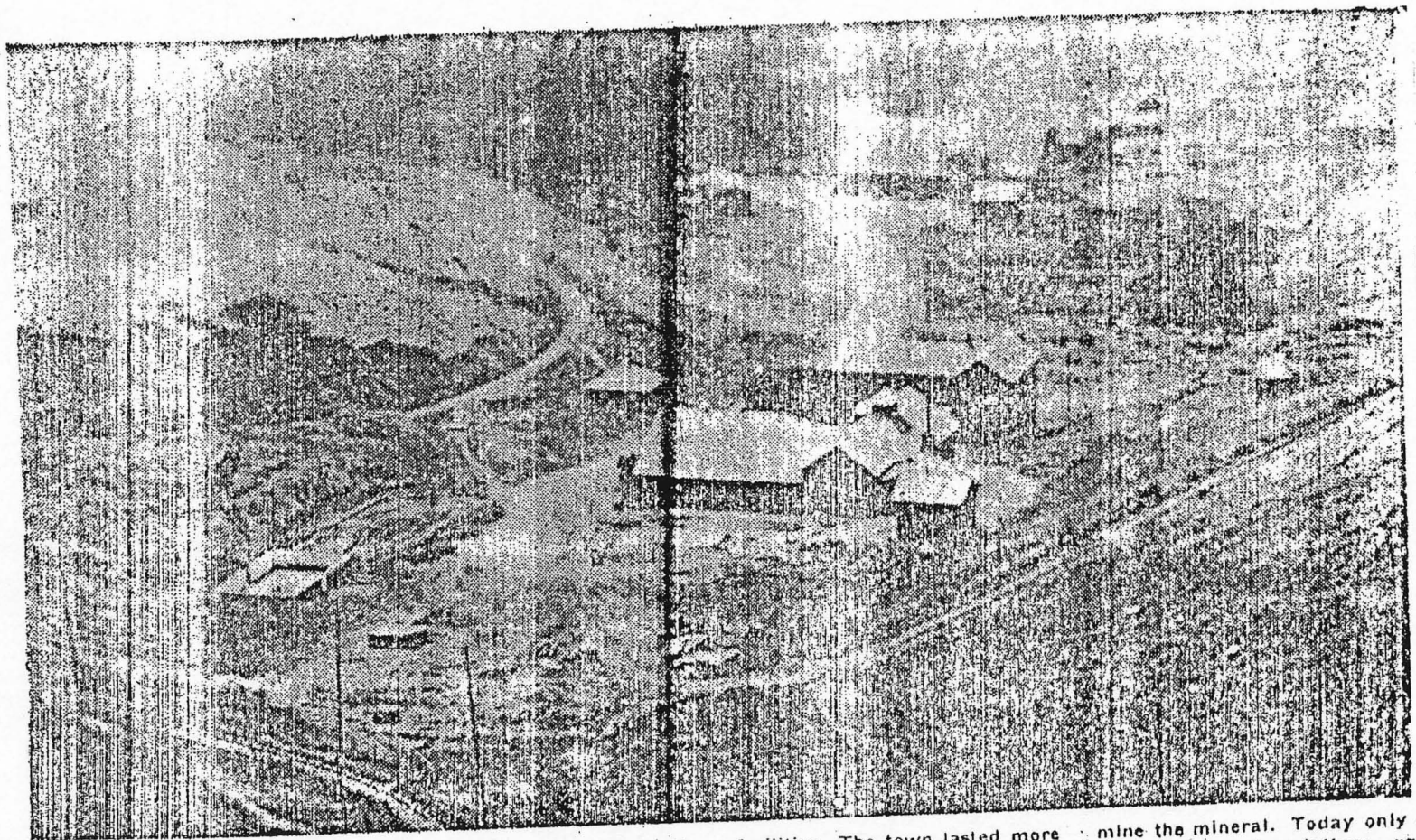
Now there are only memories of Cement's booming days.

Some of the residents recall the topic of conversation when Clyde Wright bought a new Model "T" Ford with push button top that in those days was referred to as a "Jenny." Next to purchase an automobile was Mike Lambranda.

In those days, the towns Fairfield and Suisun had about 1000 population, there were sidewalks as we know them today and only a few business places even ventured to install the old fashioned wooden sidewalks.

There are still a few of the residents of Cement Hill residing in our area and in Fairfield. These are Doc Moret, Bill O'Connor, Jack Morgan, Mike Lambranda and Clyde Wright.

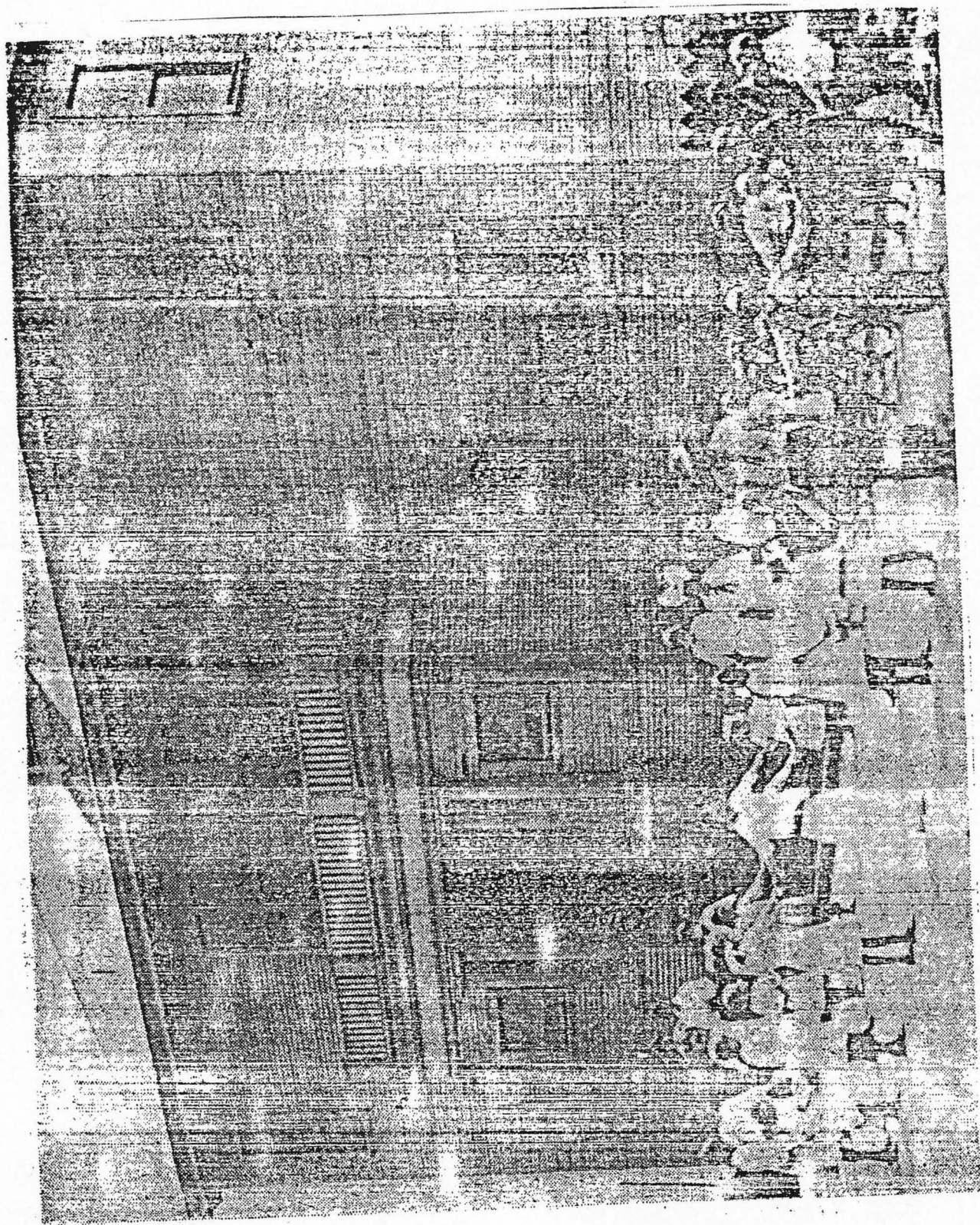
To them the memories cannot be erased and when they look at Cement Hill they do not see the skeleton remains but a city that lived and died in years.



CEMENT—None of the buildings in the photo above exist today, but shortly after the turn of the century they were the hub of Cement, a bustling city north of Fairfield, which even had a school of its own (photo below), stores, homes, and other

facilities. The town lasted more than a quarter century until the supply of cement dwindled and it became no longer feasible to

mine the mineral. Today only a few crumbled foundations—and a few memories—remain.



Stone ruins cement our memory of the past

By Barry Eberling
of the Daily Republic

FAIRFIELD — A cluster of stone towers sits in the rural hills of northern Fairfield above the Paradise Valley Golf Course, looking like an abandoned fortress or maybe a local version of Sleeping Beauty's castle at Disneyland.

But it could just as well be a massive tombstone commemorating the days when the empty hills were abuzz with activity. All that's missing is the inscription, "Pacific Portland Cement Works, 1902-1927."

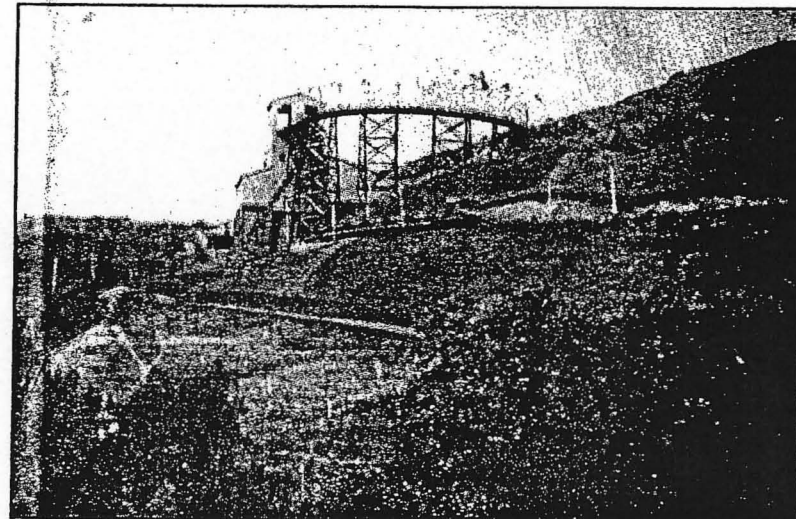
The tower cluster, which is

private property, is now mostly a curiosity piece for Paradise Valley golfers and drivers on Interstate 80. In its heyday, it formed the foundation for a giant crusher that pulverized lime rock.

Hundreds of men worked on the hills in the early 1900s. They spent six days a week quarrying lime and clay from the earth, shipping it around in cars on train trestles and turning it into cement.

They and their families lived near the quarries and mills, where rows of red houses with green picket fences

Please see Ruins, Back Page



Courtesy photo

A 1908 postcard of the quarry and rock crusher in Cement.

Ruins

From Page One

formed the company town known as Cement.

The cement plant was big news locally when Pacific opened it up in August 1902 at a cost of \$350,000. It shipped cement to San Francisco and could supply all the cement for the Pacific coast, the Solano Republican boasted.

Pacific opened the town of Cement a few months later. It was about three miles from Fairfield and Suisun City, which combined had about 1,000 residents, and was self-contained.

The company kept a grocery store stocked with everything from food to clothing. Pacific even raised its own beef cows for the butcher shop.

Cement's hotel housed visitors and was the site of the annual dance, a big event in central Solano County. Gov. Hiram Johnson visited the hotel in 1912 to give a speech. Blasting rock out of the quarries was dangerous work, as a Jan. 20, 1905, accident demonstrated.

It was cooler than 50 degrees, too cold for dynamite, and a worker had to dip the dynamite sticks into hot water to get them ready for use. He used a fire in the blacksmith shop to heat the water.

The man put the water can on the fire and it exploded, killing him and the blacksmith. Perhaps he had left a stick of dynamite in the water, or maybe the water had become permeated with dynamite, the Solano Republican said.

But Cement was also a place to raise families and have fun.

"It was just a wonderful place for children, because you had to make up your own amusement," said Marvel Little, who was born there in 1916.

She and her friends played kick-the-can and hiked around the hills, Little said. Sometimes the circus set up its tent on the baseball diamond or children rushed outside to marvel at an airplane flying overhead, an infrequent event.

One of Little's young playmates was Bobby Elliot, who later played two decades



Daily Republic/CHARLOTTE SCHMID-MAYBACH

Walter Wright and his sister Marvel Little grew up in the town of Cement.

in major league baseball and compiled a .289 lifetime batting average.

Cement had two streets, Back Street and Front Street, with the backyards connected. The Italian, Spanish and Portuguese laborers lived on the former.

The cement works raised plenty of dust, but the prevailing west winds blew the dust away from town, said W.C. Wright, Little's brother.

Their father was a mechanic whose love for fishing once got him in trouble.

He used to get catfish from the sloughs of Suisun Marsh and put them in old quarries near Cement, which were filled with water. The catfish thrived, multiplied and ended up clogging the Cement water system, Little said.

Cement's workers found ways to keep themselves amused. There was always the time-honored snipe hunt.

Once the locals took two visitors to Alkali Lake a few miles from town. They told the visitors to wait quietly holding lanterns to attract snipes into bags.

Then the locals snuck back to Cement to laugh at their joke. After three hours, the visitors realized they had been had and went back to town to wreak revenge, though the Solano Republican was vague on this latter point.

Cement had its share of successes over the years. Around 1916, it provided virtually all the cement for the massive Yolo Causeway running over the flood plain between Sacramento and Davis.

But, by 1927, the clay and rock in local hills had run low and the Pacific Portland Cement Co. left. About all that remains are few buildings, massive scars in the earth and the foundation for the rock crusher — or a castle in the hills.

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Category: Features

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Ghostly remnants of Cement City

Fairfield community was once a bustling mining town

When my children were much younger, I used to tell them that the structure sitting on the hills, north of Fairfield, and east of Highway 40 (now Interstate 80) was an ancient castle that had fallen to ruin.

Evidently, I am not the only one who saw the resemblance. My fanciful tale fed into their make-believe world, but perhaps it would have been better to tweak their imaginations with the truth.

A century ago, in a not-too-distant place, there was a city where children were born of parents who worked in a mine with trains, steam shovels and a huge factory complex. In this city on the hill, there was a hotel, a two-room school house, post office, hospital, fire department, livery stable, grocery store, butcher shop and streets lined with houses, all painted red - in other words, a complete city.

stood on the northern edge of the Fairfield city limit, north of what is now Cement Hill Road.

The only thing that remains are the ghostly remnants of the cement towers that either held up the conveyer system structure, or ore hoppers that emptied into train cars for transport into the factory.

Ruth Kilkenny in 1986 wrote a story for the Solano Historian about growing up in Cement City. "Cottages were built for company officials, which housed the executives and foremen on the 'front street,' and the 'back street' consisted mostly of what we would call the 'minority' of those days - namely Italians, Portuguese and Spanish.

"I am sorry to say that the 'front street' kids (streets and sidewalks were dirt) would have their share of battles with the 'back street' kids. Our back yards (which were partitioned by picket fences) were back-to-back and we would make our own forts out of corrugated tin sheeting and would exchange rocks, clods, or anything that was available at the time.

"We never held any malice toward them though, and by that evening you would probably find us all playing ball, 'run sheep run,' 'one foot off the gutter,' 'sardines' or marbles together."

In August of 1904, The (Fairfield) Republican made note of the second anniversary of the company town: "The plant started out with a capacity of 600 barrels of cement per day. A year later, additional machinery was installed and the capacity increased to 1,600 per day." The Pacific Portland Cement Co. continued to build up its town, located near Cement Hill Road.

Ernest D. Wichels, who wrote a history column for the Vallejo Times Herald from 1963 until around 1989, wrote of an interview with Al Rohrer, who talked about his early days working on the railroad at Cement City: "In 1923 I was working as a boilermaker's helper in the roundhouse of the C.T.T. (Cement, Tolenas and Tidewater Railroad). . . . The rail line was a spur off the Southern Pacific line and was probably owned by the Portland Cement Co."

This rail line connected with boats at Suisun harbor. It was also used by the Cement Co. to bring gondola loads of required rock from Auburn, up in Placer County. Solano County pioneer Lew Morrill supplied old photos to Wichels showing the oil pipeline, which also ran from Suisun harbor to Cement City, and the flat-bottomed oil barges coming upstream.

Rohrer continued, "We, the single employees, lived at the Golden Gate Hotel (then Solano County's largest), and since

the cuisine in the hotel dining room left something to be desired, we often rode the old trolley (the C.T.T. railroad was electrified) into Suisun for some good food.

A shuttle bus also ran from Fairfield into the town of Cement. . . . Naturally the town of Cement was covered with cement dust and the breathing of the polluted air made me wonder what was happening to my lungs . . . so after four months, I quit."

Kilkenny confirms the complaint about the cement dust in her essay as well: "Working conditions at first were rigid with the men working 12-hour shifts . . . President Wilson introduced the eight-hour day, after which the mills changed to three shifts per day.

"A three-room apartment rented for \$12 a month, and groceries cost the average family about \$40 a month. Salaries were low, with apprentices earning \$1.75 a day in 1910 and \$4 a day in 1927.

"The turnover was frequent due to dust. Many could not stand the powder-fine particles which would cling to them, but the steady personnel found after the powder had once turned to cement and peeled off, it was no longer a problem.

When the old mill ran out of cement material, which it did in 1917, a new mill was built south of town and relocated the headquarters to the schoolhouse to be nearer the work. The old vacated office was made into a two-room schoolhouse and an auditorium which was used for town meetings, church and floating shows. Once in a while a drummer would come into town, set up movie equipment and anybody with a dime would be treated to a film.

The new office shared its building with a laboratory where chemists would test the cement. The upstairs accommodated an office for the engineers, a post office and the telephone office. If you wanted to call someone locally, all you had to do was turn the crank on your phone and the operator would answer. You would tell her who you wanted to speak to and she would make the connection.

At night, Cement City's lights could be seen for miles, and as one resident recalled, "like a million diamonds brilliantly displaying their radiance."

On March of 1927, the end came to the mining operations. Supply of rock and clay deposits were nearly exhausted. The Pacific Portland Cement Co. sold out for \$100,000 and relocated to Redwood City.

All of the buildings were sold to private individuals; many of the houses were relocated to Fairfield. When S.I.O. (Solano Irrigation District) put their canal in years later, they eradicated all traces of foundations and the lone tree that had stood in the center of town.

So you see children, there once was a town that was full of life and sparkled at night for the world to see. The only remains are the ghostly castle that stands as a centennial to once what had been.

References: The Solano Historian, Vol. III, Dec. 1986 Vallejo Times Herald, "Pages From the Past: Old-Timer Remembers" by Ernest D. Wichels, Daily Republic, "Man Working on Armijo High: Solano Heritage" by Barry Eberling, 1989, Daily Republic, "Fairfield's Little Castle on a Hill," by Jess Sullivan, Daily Republic, Jan. 2000.

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Copy Story to Production

FUSD history involves massive building

By Ann Hennessey

Daily Republic Staff Writer

FAIRFIELD — The modern history of the Fairfield-Suisun Unified School District involves massive building and overcrowding.

"This goes back to World War II when Travis was established as an Air Force base," said Bill Chadbourne, Solano County superintendent of schools.

However, the history of area schools reaches back before that, at least back to the 1800s when "The Weekly Solano Herald," an ancestor of the Daily Republic, ran school finance reports. Not much school news was published, save the finance reports and school elections.

The newspaper reported that Fairfield schools led Solano County in enrollment gains in 1860, particularly in the elementary schools where a 10 percent gain brought the student population up to 316 pupils.

In 1863, the paper reported, the state contributed 90 cents per student while the county threw in \$2.17 giving the schools \$3.07 a student. Today the Fairfield-Suisun Unified School District spends \$2,200 a student.

The Oct. 21, 1863 issue of the paper reported that the Solano County election results were in

and John Swett had defeated O.M. Wozencraft 1,506 to 466 in the race for superintendent of public instruction. Today the California Teachers Association offers education reporters a prestigious award called the John Swett Award.

About the time Charles Sullivan — whom the intermediate school was named after — became superintendent of the Fairfield Elementary District in 1945, the building boom started.

At the beginning of the 1940s, Fairfield had about 1,200 people and extended from Ohio Street Kentucky Street, Chadbourne said. "Then, after the war, the birthrate took off," he said. "It's been continual growth since that time."

At that time the area had five elementary school districts and one high school district: Armijo High, Fairfield Elementary, Falls Elementary, Crystal Elementary, Suisun Valley Elementary and Green Valley Intermediate. Fairfield Elementary was the largest with 17 teachers and 420 students.

The Fairfield Elementary District had two schools: a primary school built in the 1920s which now houses the administration building and a three-story wooden building nearby that Sullivan called a "fire trap." That

was later torn down.

In 1948 the Fairfield Elementary District got another school: Fairfield Elementary School. The school, the first to be built after the war, had 12 rooms and a kindergarten, Sullivan said. The kindergarten through eighth-grade school was financed by a Christmas tree fund and a \$380,000 grant because, during the war, there had been no finance fund for schools, he said.

When the districts unified in 1968 the school became part of Armijo High.

From then on, "we were building schools almost as fast as contractors were building homes," Sullivan said.

In the next 10 years the district borrowed \$10 million from the state and built 15 schools, he said.

Because the district was building schools so fast — at a rate of one per year, they often-times used the same architectural designs with minor changes to fit the land. By using the same architectural plans, the district could save \$100,000 a school, Sullivan said.

About this time educators were talking about some issues that they're still talking about: parents in education, the effects of television and qualifications of teach-

ers.

In 1960 Gomer School, on Abernathy Road, was remodeled to house classes for severely handicapped students. The students were taught cooking, gardening and home care. The school was officially dedicated on Feb. 8.

Gomer School was built in 1900 by F. Hunnewell for \$1,300. A school today costs millions of dollars.

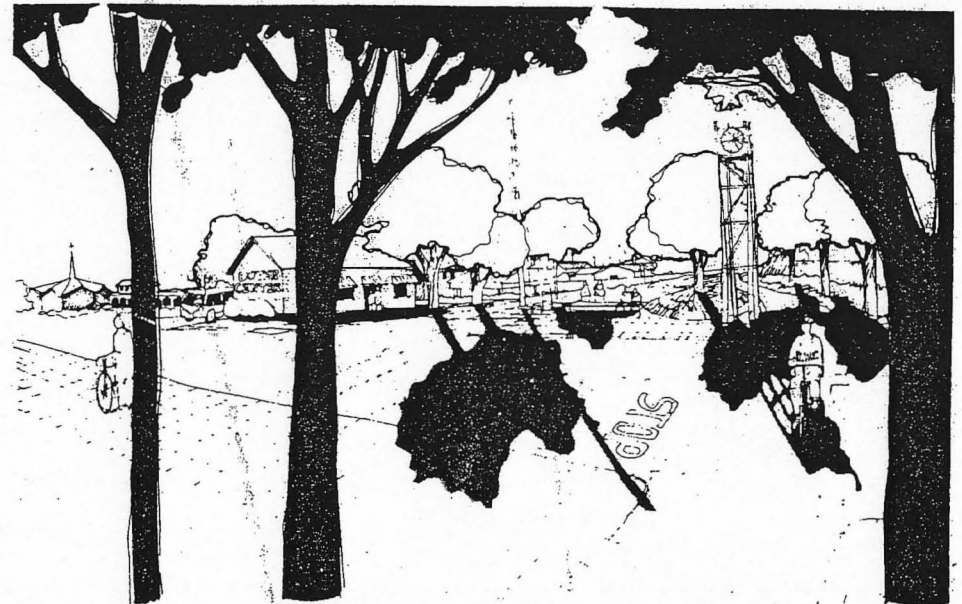
In 1968, after two votes, the six school districts unified. The move came just one year after Fairfield's new high school, Fairfield High School, opened.

Since that time the student population has grown at incredible rates and several additions have been made to schools in an attempt to compensate for those students.

However, the heavy price tags that come with new schools and the fact that Proposition 13 left schools without a major source of income has left Fairfield-Suisun Unified School District with a new kind of growing pains.

Today the district has about 13,802 students.

"As long as the Fairfield-Suisun area continues to grow, there's going to be a need for new schools," Chadbourne said.



The Old Dover School —Happy Trails To You

By KARIN KINNEY
DR Reporter

FAIRFIELD — When plans for Fairfield's trail system jell, the old Dover School may be revitalized.

Currently used as a residence, the 1881-vintage one-room school has seen better days.

The Recreation Commission suggested that the city acquire the old building on Dover Avenue next to Trinity Lutheran Church as an activity center for a proposed six-mile-long parkway.

The building then would serve as an opening point for the trails system, which runs through the heart of the city along the abandoned Sacramento-Northern Railroad right-of-way and into Suisun Valley.

Old Dover School was still going strong in 1952 with 37 pupils. But a couple of years later school buses helped consolidate districts and the small schools were closed.

Farmer and poet ("I Feel A Poem Coming On") J.W. Hawkins assessed the abandoned structure as solid and bought the building with a \$110.10 bid in 1955 to rebuild it into a home for his family.

"The old school house had 12-foot-high ceilings," Hawkins said. "It was put together with square nails, double-lapped red-wood siding eight inches wide. The timber was oversized everywhere. Two-by-fours were two-by-fours plus, rafters were more than six inches wide, floor joists more than eight inches wide."

Hawkins had the building transported to its present location and began remodeling, changing the cloak rooms into a kitchen and bathroom, lowering the ceiling to eight feet and making the windows smaller.

"There were three sets of floors," Hawkins noted. "Why, nobody knows. Apparently, when they scuffed up the floor, they just put a new one on top of it."

Three sides of the classroom were framed by heavy slate blackboards. Much to Hawkins' surprise, when he dismantled the slate, he found boards painted black below them, still showing arithmetic problems.

Hawkins regrets having discarded these historic boards, but he did save three of the students' desks for his daughters, a piece

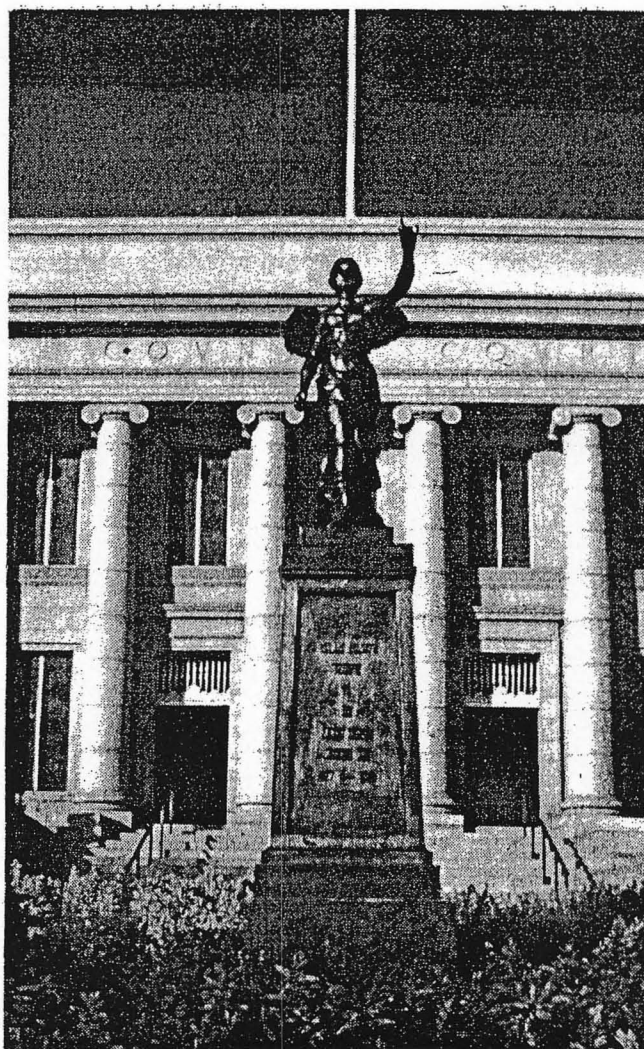
of slate and the teacher's desk, which had been installed on a raised platform.

Farmer-poet J.W. Hawkins points to the old Dover School, which he moved in 1955 to its present location and remodeled into a residence. Fairfield's trail system may incorporate the school as an activity center, as envisioned in this artist's conception, which looks west from Dover Street.

of slate and the teacher's desk, which had been installed on a raised platform.

The Hawkins family lived in the old school 11 years. He described the location, now surrounded by development tracts, as "way out in the country," where they raised chickens, goats, pigs and turkeys.

When they had a chance to buy a larger farm on Vanden Road, Hawkins sold the school house to the present owner, who is renting it out.

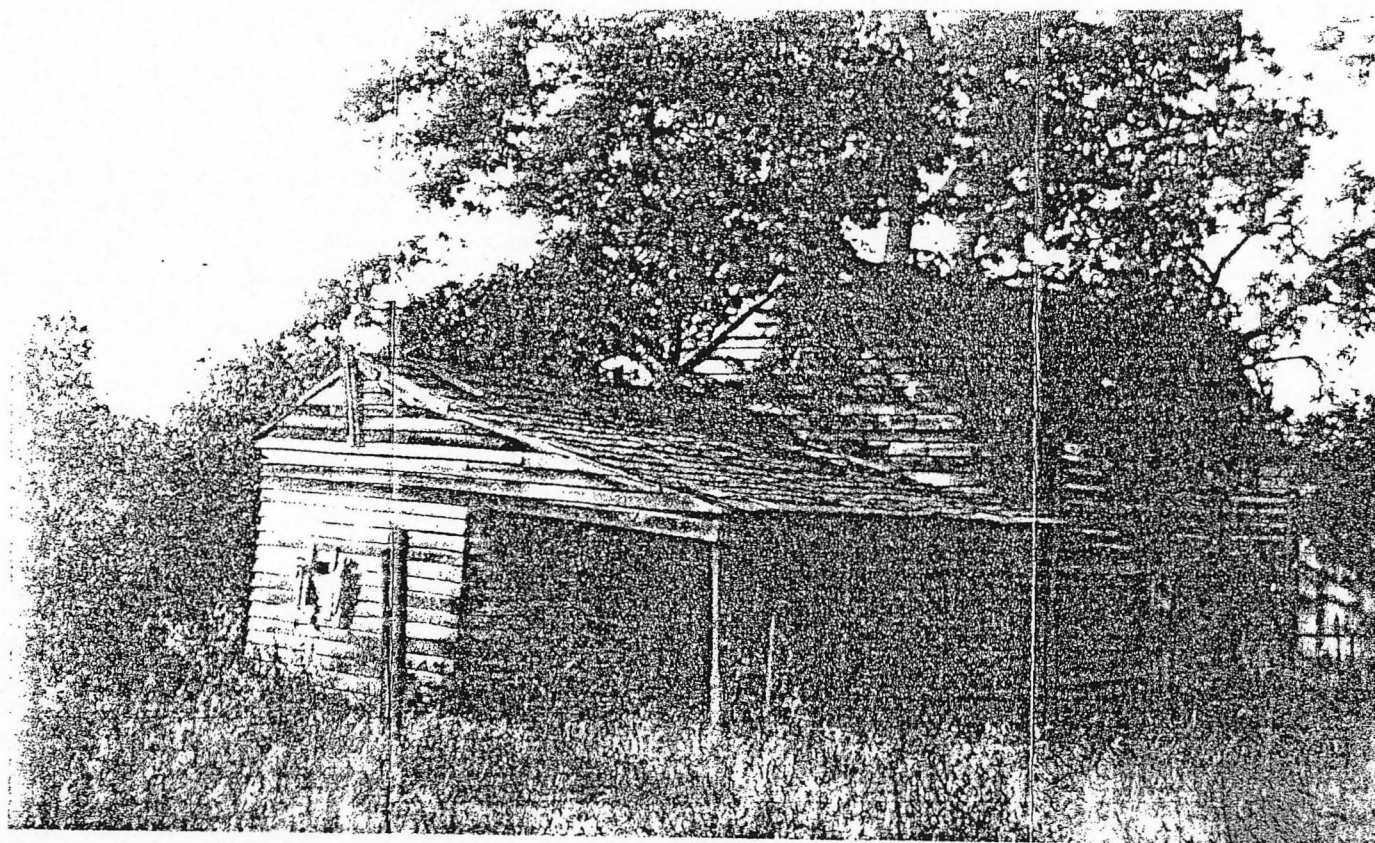


DR Photo by Dudley Owens

"Winged Victory," a memorial statue set in front of the Fairfield County Courthouse honors those who have died in America's wars. Each Memorial Day Simmons-Sheldon Post 2333, Reams Post 182 American Legion and their auxiliaries place a wreath upon its head as a tribute.



This photograph is of the pioneer Davisson cabin, first built in 1848 and occupied about 1854 by Obidiah Davisson who came to California by wagon train. It was located on Abernathy Lane, and the lumber was carted from Oregon in 1847 by Ox team. Unfortunately, this landmark burned about 1960. This is one of many photographs from the collection of the late Wood Young, historian-emeritus of the Solano County Historical Society.



Thanks to the early photographer with glass negatives and cumbersome cameras we of the present generation can visualize the "family home" of 130 years ago. Like the Obidiah Davisson cabin, built on property now known as the John R. Davisson Ranch on Abernathy Lane, Suisun Valley, in 1847 (it burned about 1965); or the original Pena Adobe, built about 1842, this photograph shows the first Charles Hopper family cabin in the foothills west of Yountville built in 1848. Hopper first came by wagon train to Napa Valley in 1841 (with the Chiles, Bartelson, Bidwell, Weber and Kelseys); returned to the East and came back in 1847 with his family, and lived in this "home." It was replaced by an attractive two-story frame house late in the 1850s.

The Hopper Ranch is of interest to Solanoans. Another pioneer, Patrick Walsh, about 1872, came to this area and lived on the Hopper Ranch for several years. Then the Walsh family moved to Napa Junction, and later developed the Walsh Ranch just north of Vallejo (between American Canyon Road and Chabot Terrace).

The childhood of Leo and Charls Walsh (widely-known Vallejoans) was spent on the Hopper Ranch, and a sister (Mrs. Dan Madigan) was born there.

This photograph is from the collection of Mrs. Ed Owens, granddaughter of Hopper, who lived in Woodland.



Mike McCoy/DAILY REPUBLIC

From bridges to jails to this former water tower in Fairfield, county surveyor Frank Steiger left his mark on Solano County landmarks.

Tower typical of surveyor's work

By Sylvia Rodriguez
DAILY REPUBLIC

FAIRFIELD — The large medieval-style tower behind the old county courthouse is a relic of Frank Steiger, Solano County's surveyor from 1918 until 1942.

The County Water Tower was modeled after the county jail of that time. The octagonal tower stands 50 feet high and is made of reinforced concrete, one of Steiger's trademarks.

From the Yolo-Solano Bridge over Putau Creek in Winters to the Suisun Valley Creek Bridge, Steiger used reinforced

**What
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concrete to build structures throughout the county.

But the tower is thought to be one of the closest to Steiger's heart, according to local historians.

The water tower was born in 1919 when the Solano County Board of Supervisors' decided to have it constructed to serve the county courthouse and jail on Texas Street. The jail was torn down in the past decade, replaced by the new jail on Union

Avenue, but the supervisors voted to protect the water tower from destruction.

The tower was built by Olaf Olson of Dixon, who built it for \$2,264. Olson completed the job in fall 1919, seven months after being commissioned to complete the task.

The tower served its purpose until 1932, when Fairfield began serving the county's courthouse, jail and library with water.

Since then, the County Water Tower has been used for storage by the Buildings and Grounds Division of the Solano County Public Works Department.

Geologic impediment



Christine Baker/DAILY REPUB

Visible from Rockville Road is the Cordelia Fault, which is active, and is an offshoot of the Green Valley Fault.

Fault on edge of proposed development

By Mark Simborg
DAILY REPUBLIC

FAIRFIELD — A middle school, some businesses and one of Fairfield's two water treatment facilities could suffer a nasty jolt should one little known but highly visible earthquake fault move.

Much attention has been given to the Green Valley Fault. But it wasn't until 1992 that a large section of its primary offshoot, the Cordelia Fault, was found to be active.

There's no record of an earthquake along the fault, which runs from somewhere south of Cordelia, under Interstates 680 and 80,

through Rockville Hills Park and well into Suisun Valley.

Until 1992, only the part of the fault south of I-80 was thought to be active.

Then soil surveys taken for a city-planned office park north of the interstate showed evidence of movement sometime in the last 11,000 years, qualifying that section of the fault as "active."

The office park is still planned. Green Valley Middle School, San Francisco Express Pasta Restaurant and a Goodwill store are within a quarter mile of the fault, as is the area once

Many stores are within a quarter mile of the fault, as is the area once planned a residential development, which would likely be revived if land-use initiative Measure I passes in November.

See Fault, Page A7

Fault

From Page One

planned for the White Wing residential development, which would likely be revived if land-use initiative Measure I passes in November.

Also, the fault runs right under the North Bay Water Treatment Facility.

"There's no question that could be a source of local activity," said Earl Hart, a retired senior geologist with the California Division of Mines and Geology.

Even after a certain required set-back distance, earthquakes are stronger closer to the fault, Hart.

Still, all apocalyptic attention has been directed to the Green Valley Fault.

The fault runs 30 miles from Walnut Creek to Napa County, skirting Cordelia Villages and Green Valley developments along the way.

A 7.1 quake on the Green Valley Fault

would cripple the county's transit infrastructure, closing more than 70 roads along I-680, according to a 1997 report by the Association of Bay Area Governments.

"I don't think anyone really makes any predictions on the Cordelia Fault because it's such a minor fault," said Gene Cortright, an assistant city engineer who oversees Fairfield's assessment of developers' "seismic threat" studies, which are required of all developments in the city.

"Just because there's a fault there, it doesn't preclude anyone from building," Cortright said.

The Cordelia Fault is most visible where it crosses Rockville Road in Suisun Valley, just east of what would be the entrance to the twice-proposed, 400-plus home White Wing development.

Last year, a developer trimmed four

homes off a planned Green Valley project Eastridge — to avoid building over the Cordelia Fault.

The state requires all residential development to be at least 50 feet from a fault.

Environmental impact reports suggest a 100-foot setback for White Wing, said Dave Carroll, president of White Wing development.

The area is "probably the least suitable for agriculture and the most suitable for development of all the sites in the B. Area," Carroll assured. "It's basical bedrock."

If Measure I passes, the city's development limit line would be extended to include White Wing.

Funding problems killed the project in 1982 and a dispute over septic systems kept the project in the planning stages in 1995.

Historic highway passed through town

By Jess Sullivan
DAILY REPUBLIC

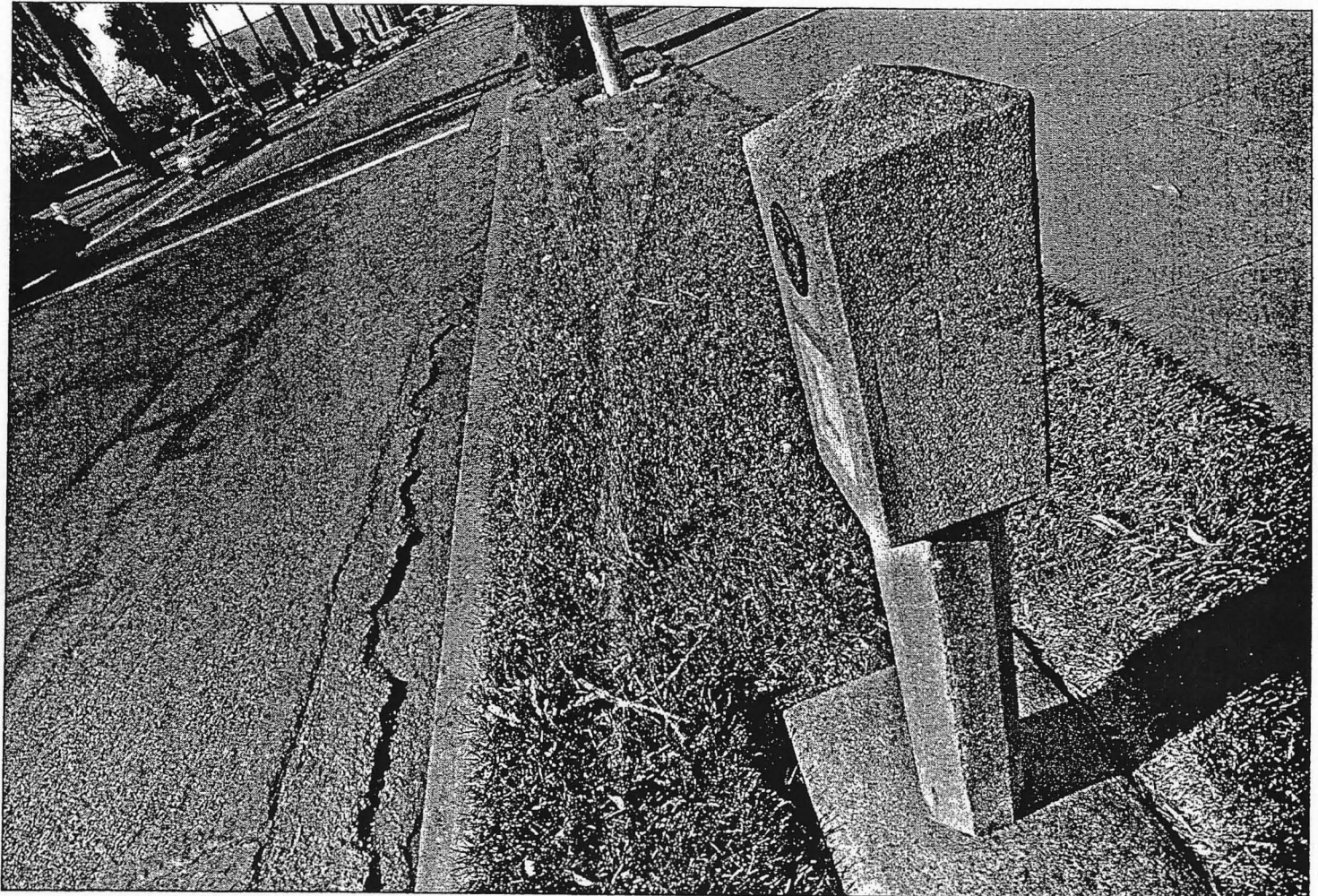
FAIRFIELD — It was the first transcontinental hard-surfaced road in the United States, running from Times Square in New York City to the Pacific Ocean near San Francisco's Lincoln Park.

More than a decade before the federal government got involved in road building, auto manufacturers understood the need for paved and clearly marked roads if they were going to convince the public to buy the new-fangled horseless carriages. They formed the Lincoln Highway Association and began a private fund-raising effort to raise \$10 million for the construction of the cross-country roadway.

Dedicated in 1913, the Lincoln Highway, named for President Abraham Lincoln, was a project that reduced driving time across the continent from 30 days to 20 days at what was then the high speed for the time, 30 mph.

Fairfield is home to one of the last remaining Lincoln Highway markers still in its original location.

Following a path similar to the modern Interstate 80, the Lincoln Highway stretched across the Midwestern plains and cut a swath across the barren desert and in places used the experimental road building material of concrete.



Judith Sagami/DAILY REPUBLIC

The original route of the Lincoln Highway left San Francisco, crossed the Altamont Pass to Tracy and east to Stockton before cutting north to Sacramento and continuing east into the Sierras and beyond.

In 1927, with the opening of the Carquinez Bridge, the first major, modern steel bridge built in the West, the route of the Lincoln Highway was moved, crossing through Napa, Solano and Yolo counties.

At the same time, the federal government stepped into the road building business launching a unified method for identifying highway routes by using numbers.

Interest in the Lincoln Highway Association dwindled and, on Dec. 31, 1927, the organization stopped operating.

In a grand farewell gesture to the Lincoln Highway, the association petitioned the federal government for permission to erect a series of concrete posts along the length of the entire route.

In September 1928, Boy Scouts from

the 12 states along the route of the Lincoln Highway gathered at more than 3,000 locations where the memorial markers were to be placed.

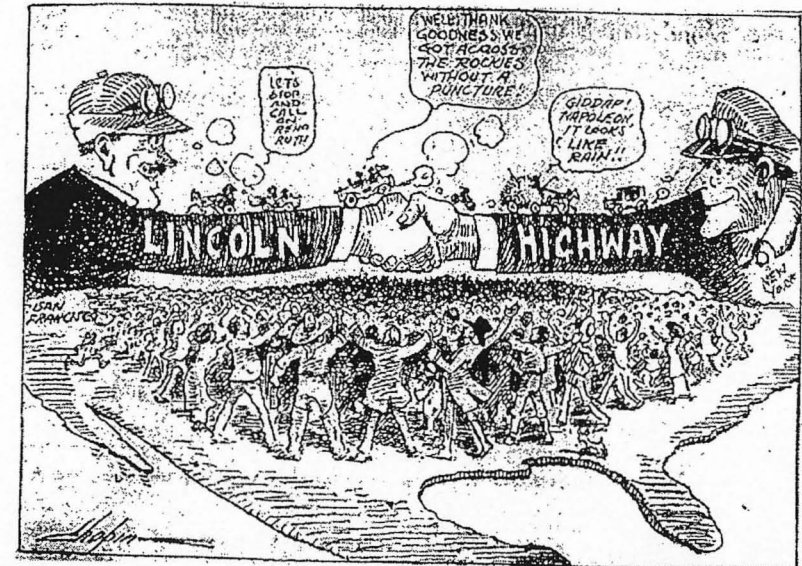
The Solano Republican captured the event for posterity telling how Scoutmaster Joe Gerevas led local Scouts from Suisun and Fairfield in placing the markers at My Place, a restaurant in Lagoon Valley; on Chadbourne Road and in Cordelia.

"This means many thousands of additional cars will travel over this highway than was the case formerly," the newspaper predicted.

Today, few of the concrete markers remain as time has taken its toll on them. In California, some of the markers are preserved in museums or parks, but most have disappeared.

Discreetly standing next to the Fairfield street sign at the intersection of Texas Street and Union Avenue in front of the old county courthouse, the 71-year-old marker, with its bronze tribute to Lincoln, commemorates a time when cars competed with horses and trolleys along Fairfield's few paved roads.

In 1992, the Lincoln Highway Associ-



COURTESY PHOTO

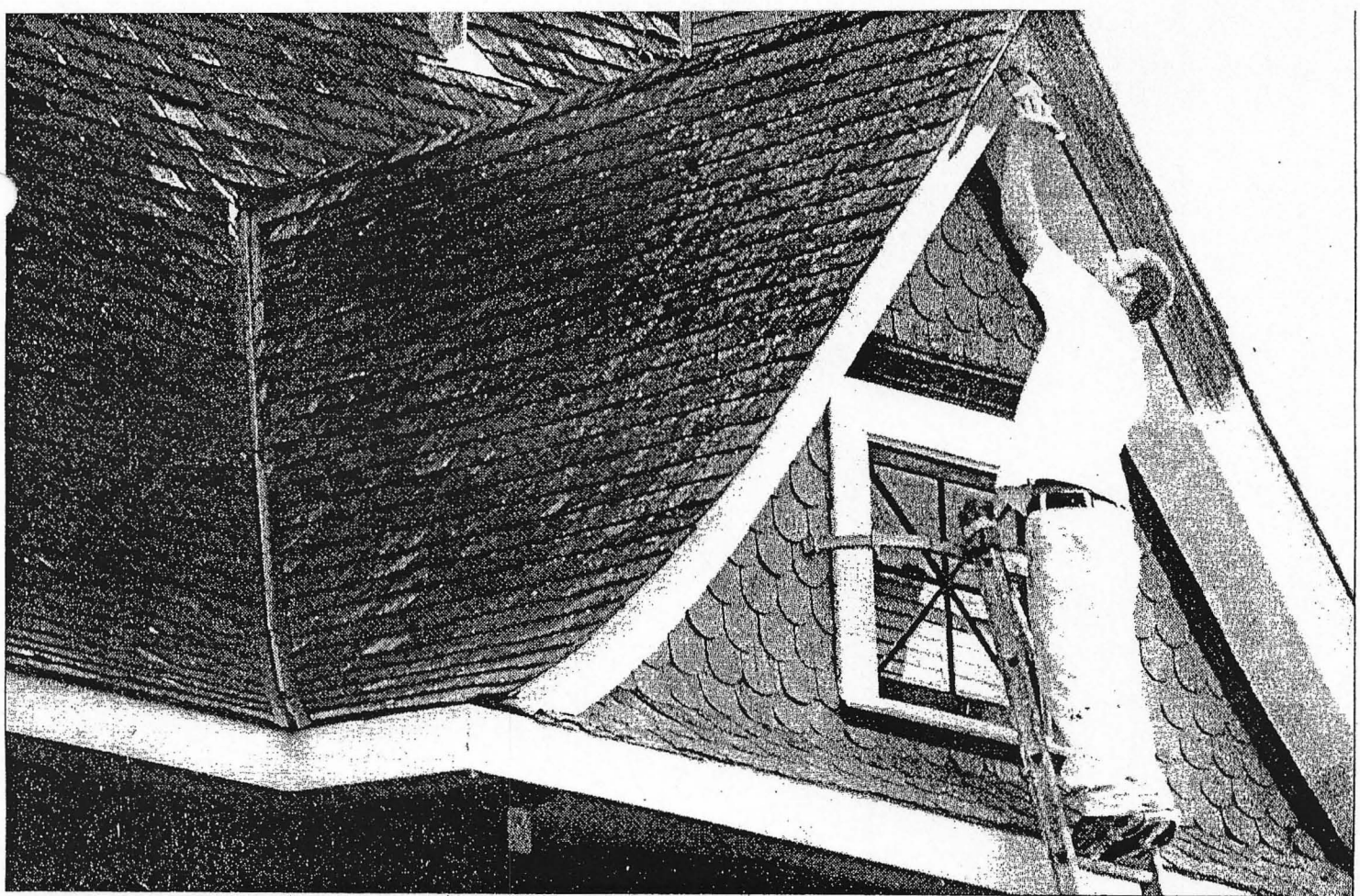
Above, the Lincoln Highway marker sits at the intersection of Union Avenue and Texas Street in downtown Fairfield. Left, a cartoon on the sign.

ation was revived and now more than 1,000 members nationwide regularly meet to plan tours of America's history and to wax nostalgic about the dawn of highway travel.

The California Chapter of the Lincoln Highway Association will hold its

next meeting on Jan. 8 in the Old Lincoln Highway Garage at the corner of North L Street and Portola Avenue in Livermore.

For more information, call chapter president Mary Salazar at (530) 467-2747.



Gary Goldsmith/DAILY REPUBLIC

Jeff Erickson paints the three-story Victorian home of Ron and Terry Phillips on Solano Street in Old Town Suisun.

Old Town's historic homes

By Ana Facio Contreras
DAILY REPUBLIC

SUISUN CITY — Learning about the history of their 1904 Victorian home at 300 California St. has always been fun for Gerald and Chris Raycraft.

Since the couple bought the home in 1979, they have learned several interesting things. For example, the home may have been "a house of ill repute" in the 1950s. Raycraft said an elderly Suisun City resident, who has since died, told him about the rumor.

To add a twist to the story of the home's past, Raycraft said he also was told Elvis Presley was rumored to have stayed at the home while he was stationed at Travis Air Force Base. Raycraft doesn't know whether to believe the story, but said the senior citizen claimed the rumor to be true.

As a joke, the couple often talked about renting one of the rooms in the two-story, gray and white home, with a sign reading "Elvis slept here."

Another rumor is that the home is "haunted."

But there are similar stories about several of the other Victorian homes that dot the streets off Main Street in



Gary Goldsmith/DAILY REPUBLIC

Gerald and Chris Raycraft have gradually been restoring this Victorian.

Old Town Suisun, he said.

All the colorful stories that came with their home are part of the charm of living in a 100-year-old house, the couple said.

"It's been really fun learning its history," Raycraft said, a planning director for the Association of Bay Area

Historic From Page One

Governments. "It would really be hard to sell."

And selling the home isn't part of his plan.

Although the Raycrafts moved out of the home in 2000, they still use it for Chris' income tax preparation business. After raising a son in Suisun City, the couple now lives in Fairfield.

Since they bought the home, the couple has restored it little by little. Last year, it was a new roof and this year the exterior will be painted.

And when they moved into the home in 1979, a new foundation was built because the house had been sitting on bricks.

"My wife thought it was going to be a relatively easy project, but she didn't look under the house," Raycraft said.

One of the challenges of living in a Victorian home is restoring and fixing it, he said.

Ron and Terry Phillips, who own an 1895 Queen Anne Victorian home at 205 Solano St., agreed with Raycraft.

Since the couple bought the home in 1993, they have invested about \$70,000 into fixing it up, said Ron Phillips, a paint contractor.

When his wife told him she wanted to buy the home in 1993, Phillips said he

thought she was "crazy." At the time the home needed a lot of work. The paint was chipping, and the interior left much to be desired. However, Terry Phillips thought the three-story home with a wrap-around porch had potential.

Since then, during the Christmas season, the house attracts visitors who admire the 3,000 to 4,000 lights that decorate the home's exterior.

Like the Raycraft home, the Phillips home also is rumored to be haunted.

When his family moved into the home in 1993, the surrounding neighborhood was reputed to be a "shady place" where criminals hung out, Ron Phillips said.

These "bad guys" apparently believed the home was haunted because they would avoid walking by his home and instead would cross the street, Phillips said.

So, in a way, the house was a deterrent to crime, he said jokingly.

Many of the remaining homes in Old Town fell to disrepair and neglect in the 1950s and 1960s, Raycraft said.

Some homes, such as a greenish-blue Victorian at 214 Solano St., across from Phillips' home, are being bought, he said. From a passerby's perspective, the house, with its broken windows and old paint, needs repair.

Phillips said it would be nice if more people preserved these homes.

Suisun City Councilwoman Jane Day, who lives in an Italianate Victorian at 301 Morgan St. with her husband, agreed.

"They're the heritage of our city," Day said. "We've lost many of them due to neglect. . . . I think it's important to maintain the history of the city through the preservation of these homes."

Day and her husband bought their 126-year-old home about 25 years ago. Day and others who live in Old Town Suisun think the old homes give that part of the city character, a sense of history and a small-town feel.

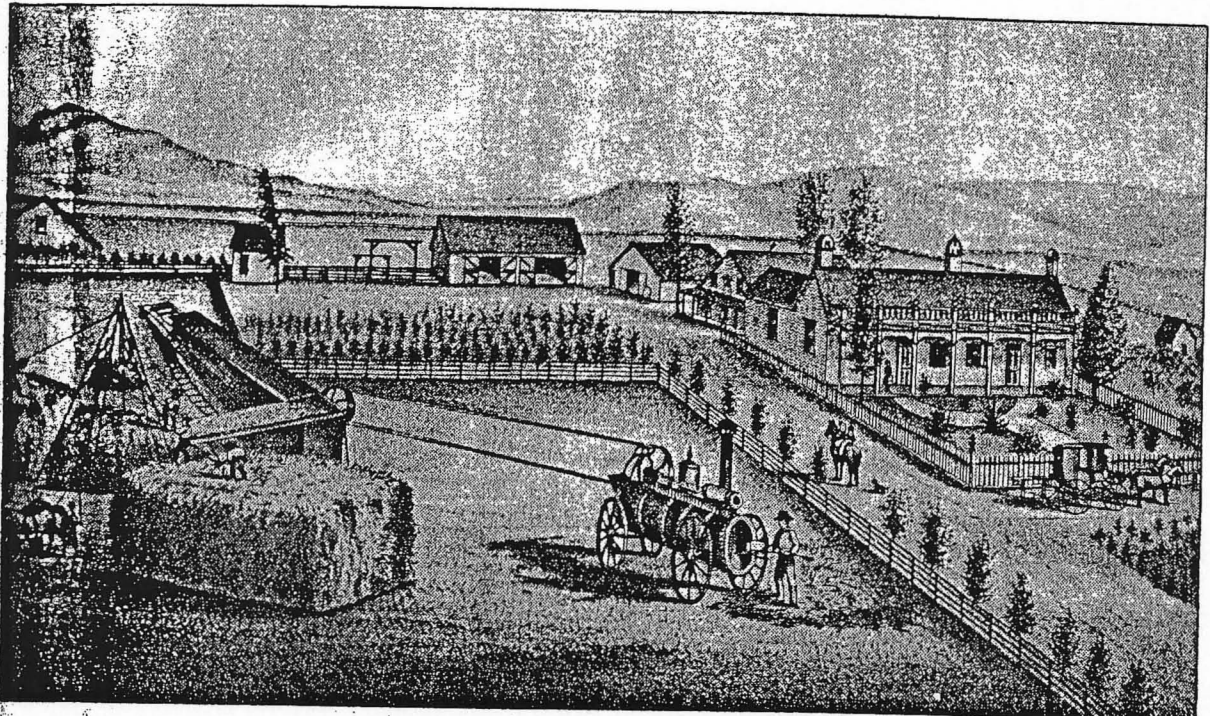
Something else that gives the area its small-town charm are buildings such as the old firehouse on Suisun and California streets, Raycraft said. The 1901 firehouse, which the city sold to a man who plans to restore it, is down the street from Raycraft's home.

All in all, the trials and tribulations of owning and living in a Victorian home hasn't been that bad, Phillips said.

"The house is still a work in progress," he added. "Fixing it has been a labor of love."

Ana Facio Contreras can be reached at acontreras@dailyrepublic.net.

Suisun City of 1887: A vital, colorful community



The above engraving, borrowed from the 1877 Solano County Atlas, depicts what is identified as the Daniel McCreary farm as it appeared late in the last century. The farm was located near Suisun according to the atlas.

Historic Art

SOLANO HERITAGE

Destructive fires, blistering editorials dominated press

(Editor's note: This is one in an occasional series about Solano County's history.)

By Barry Eberling
Daily Republic Staff Writer

SUISUN CITY — During 1887, Suisun City made plans to finance a new civic center, experienced some political battles and worked on attracting new development.

The city faced different challenges 100 years ago. For example, rather than trying to keep up with new potholes in the streets, town officials were trying to get them paved.

And things weren't going smoothly with the fire department. Troubles with a pumper delayed firefighters from putting out a downtown blaze.

Even the newspapers had a different look in those days. The Solano Republican, which was based in Suisun City, had a tendency to put all of its local news on the third page. That included everything from major fires to suicides.

The following is a look at the year 1887 through the eyes of the Solano Republican.

January

The year started off on a musical note for Suisun residents.

"On New Year's Day, the Suisun City Band favored citizens of Suisun with an open air concert from the balcony of Cerkel's store," the Republican reports. "The boys are doing credit to themselves, and we hope they will continue to do so."

A few weeks later, the Republican editors noted that the number of local tramps was on the rise.

"The chain gang was somewhat depleted in numbers last week by the expiration of the terms of several of the vags," the paper reads. "But reinforcements are gradually being made to the force through the exertions of our vigilant officers."

February

On Feb. 11, the Republican ran an item headlined "Beautiful Snow."

"By 9 o'clock, the roofs and sidewalks of Suisun and Fairfield were covered with that fleecy mantle," the story reads.

The city got two inches of quickly melting snow. However, according to the Republican, that was enough to inspire residents to hold snow battles.

In San Francisco, the paper reports, a foot of snow fell.

A week later, the paper criticized the condition of town streets. It chastised town trustees for not spending a few hundred dollars for stones from the Cordelia quarry.

"Now the county has had a lot of rock broken up and placed upon Main Street in a few places," the Republican says. "Those places today are the only parts of our streets that are anything near dry during this rainy weather, illustrating what that kind of pavement will do for our town."

"A few hundred dollars invested in it will convert our streets from mud holes to passable thoroughfares."

May

May started off with a fire that destroyed a stable and barn, and damaged a schooner.

"The usual quiet of Suisun was broken Wednesday morning at 2 o'clock by the wild and frantic cries of fire! fire!" the Republican reports. Citizens quickly took to the streets.

When they got there, they saw light coming from the second floor of a stable that was apparently near the waterfront. People rang the fire bells and took horses and buggies from the stable.

"As soon as enough people gathered to handle the engine it was backed out and the hose layed for action," the Republican says. "Unfortunately, it was a half hour's work (until) a block of wood which prevented actions of the pumps was found and removed."

The stable burned rapidly and was soon in ruins. The fire spread to a mill and warehouse to the east. The engine house and a residence were also scorched.

"The schooner Eldie lay in the slough aside of the burning warehouse and was partially on fire," the Republican reports. "But the tide happened to be up and the crew worked hard and moved her down the slough and out of harm's way."

Later that month, the Republican ran an editorial urging people to upgrade the fire department.

"The fire company of Suisun is undoubtedly defunct," the Republican says. "The people most interested in the town and its preservation from destruction by fire should bestir themselves to organize anew and put the fire apparatus in condition for effective use."

Hoses needed to be repaired, the engine repainted and the firehouse repaired, the paper says.

Republican editors also thought town citizens needed to start shopping Suisun City. They wrote a piece titled "Suisun Boycotted."

"Ours is indeed a boycotted town," the Republican reads. "So prevalent has the habit of sending away for all kinds of goods and labor become that now it will hardly pay one of our merchants to keep a first class assortment of anything."

"If this plan of sending elsewhere for goods and labor continues, it will not be long ere our best businessmen, our best mechanics and our best citizens are compelled to leave us."

June

Suisun City law enforcement officers were doing undercover work a hundred years ago. However, rather than looking for drug dealers, they were after people breaking laws which forbade fishing from sunrise Saturday to sunset Sunday.

"Saturday afternoon, Patrol Officers J.W. Willage and John Richardson attired themselves in Mongolian costumes and taking one of the China junks, started out in quest of violators of the fish law," the Republican reports.

They came upon a Greek fisherman who had his net in the water and several salmon in his boat. Despite the man's plea that he was poor and had a large family, officers arrested him and took him to Vallejo jail. He was later released on \$100 bail.

July

"The morning of the Fourth at Suisun was all astir everyone having arraigned to enjoy the day thoroughly," the Republican reports.

At about 10 a.m., horsemen taking part in a parade left Fairfield's Hooper hotel and moved down Union Avenue toward Suisun City. They went down Main Street to Line Street to Suisun Street to Sacramento Street to Main Street to Morgan Street to Main Street.

The procession ended in front of the Reeves Opera House, where the program took place. People sang songs such as "The American Flag" and "Red, White and Blue," and listened to a reading of the Declaration of Independence.

In the afternoon, people took part in such sporting events as the wheelbarrow races and 100-yard dash. Prizes ranged from \$2.50 to \$3.

At 8:30 p.m., the "finest display of fireworks ever given in Suisun" started. This was followed by a dance with a four-piece orchestra and dinner at midnight. People then resumed dancing until 4 a.m.

September

An event reported by the Republican's Sept. 2 edition was less celebrative. A local man committed suicide.

"About 8 p.m. Tuesday evening, George Gorham went into his residence on the southwest corner of Florida and Sonoma Streets and remarked to his little daughter, who was the only one home, that he was going to shoot some rats," the Republican says. "He picked up his pistol and went out.

"Soon after a shot was heard, but no one paid any attention to it."

A half hour later, George Gorham's brother Tom saw a man lying on a steep embankment behind George's house.

"Tom Gorham stooped over the prostrate form in the bright moonlight and was horrified to find his brother lying dead in a large pool of blood and brains," the Republican reports. "An ivory handled .44-calibre revolver bespotted with blood was lying close by."

The Republican hypothesized that Gorham killed himself because of business troubles.

In mid-September, a train consisting of five Pullman sleepers, dining and kitchen cars ran off the main track in Suisun. It was going from Napa to Oakland.

According to the Republican, the train's air brake gave out.

"The ground was plowed up for 500 feet," the Republican reports. "No one was hurt except the fireman, Ed. D. Lake, who sprained his ankle jumping from the car."

The train was drawn back onto the track by a local locomotive and a few hours later continued on its journey.

October

The Republican went on the editorial offensive

again in October, this time decrying the number of drunks in Suisun City streets.

"Most thinking people in our town have arrived at the conclusion that we are day and night at the mercy of a crowd of worthless, reckless, drunken brawlers whose most exalted desire is to get filled up with cheap rot-gut whiskey and sour beer and run the town," the Republican says.

Men were rolling and wallowing half-naked in the streets and were yelling abusive language, the Republican reports.

"Why, the conditions are getting to be such that a lady does not know when she is safe to go up or down Main Street doing her shopping," the paper says. "The fact is the condition of our town relative to the subject under discussion is infinitely worse than it ever is in any other town."

November

Drunken men were not the only problem in the streets, according to the Republican.

"Occupants of the wash houses on Solano Street east of the Robert's Hotel are in the habit of throwing their dirty wash water and everything from their sinks so that it runs out upon the ground in pools and puddles," the Republican says. "(It) stands stagnant and filthy under the very buildings from which it comes."

The condition was inexcusable, the Republican says, because the offenders were wealthy enough to hook up to the sewer.

December

Local Sheriff James Rodney learned that criminals are not the only danger on the law enforcement beat.

Rodney was told to serve some Superior Court papers on Jane McCarthy in Elmira, the Republican says. He journeyed to McCarthy's residence.

"Turning toward the gate, he was confronted by an ominous card with the appalling words 'Small Pox,' in large letters upon yellow cardboard," the Republican reads.

Rodney was reportedly taken aback by the sign. When he regained his wits, he formulated a plan.

"He went to the creek nearby, got a long willow pole, carried it up to the windward side of the house, attached his attachment to it and then passed it into the window," the Republican says.

The rise, fall and rebirth of Suisun City

By Barry Eberling
DAILY REPUBLIC

Suisun City's history thus far makes a nice, three-act play.

Call it the Rise, Fall and Rebirth of Suisun City. The story starts in pioneer days of the Old West and continues to the dawn of a new millennium.

Act I — The Rise

Scene I: Curtis Wilson and Dr. John Baker sail Suisun Slough in 1850 and land on tule-covered land later to become Suisun City. They soon leave.

Capt. Josiah Wing that same year sails his schooner through the tangled mass of vegetation

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now called Suisun Marsh. He too finds the tule-covered area and in 1851 builds a warehouse there. Suisun City is incorporated in 1868.

Scene II: The railroad reaches Suisun City in 1864 and helps ensure the town's success. With the railroad and the slough, Suisun City is the transportation hub for nearby farms and ranches.

Scene III: Suisun City thrives in the late 1800s and early 1900s. It has about 850 residents, compared to Fairfield's 800. It has doctors, lawyers and bankers. It is home to state Sen. Benjamin Rush. It has hotels and Victorian homes. Steamer ships transport its residents to San Francisco. An electric train runs down Main Street starting in about 1913.

Act II — The Fall

Scene I — State workers come through the area with mule teams in 1914 to build the state highway. But Highway 40 bypasses Suisun City and runs through downtown Fairfield. Cars become more popular and trains and boat travel less so. Fairfield in coming decades eclipses Suisun City.

Scene II — By 1920, Fairfield has 1,000 residents and Suisun City about 875. By 1938-39, Fairfield has an assessed valuation of about \$788,603, compared to \$551,635 for Suisun City.

But Suisun City has moments of glory. The 1949 Academy Award-winning film "All the King's Men" has scenes shot in Suisun City's town plaza.

Scene III — City leaders in the 1960s let developers build the Crescent neighborhood. Three decades later, the dozens of fourplexes over an area of several blocks are infested with crime and drugs. New

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subdivisions go up in the eastern city in the 1980s, but the waterfront deteriorates. By the late 1980s, City Hall is located in trailers that make a strange rattling noise inside whenever a strong wind blows. The San Francisco Chronicle says Suisun City has the worst quality of life in the Bay Area.

Act III — Rebirth

Scene I — Suisun City builds a new, waterfront Civic Center.

City leaders decide in 1989 to put the entire city in a redevelopment district. This makes additional tax dollars available.

The city has money to reshape the waterfront.

Scene II — The early 1990s are a busy time. The city's Redevelopment Agency buys the Crescent neighborhoods, relocates the residents and destroys the buildings. The Victorian Harbor subdivision is now located on the site.

The city buys and destroys aging waterfront buildings. It builds a modern marina. Some people object, since the city

**Suisun City today has
about 27,000
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3.8 miles.**

takes much of the land by eminent domain and creates a \$75 million debt. But the waterfront is reborn.

Scene III — Suisun City today has about 27,000 residents. It covers 3.8 miles. The average income per household is about \$43,000. Its racial make-up is: 59.7 percent white, 14.4 percent black, .9 percent Native American, 17.1 percent Asian or Pacific Islander and 7.9 percent other races.

Despite hardships, Vacaville life was bearable

By Linda Yoshikawa
Daily Republic Staff Writer

VACAVILLE — Homes were tents or canvas-covered wagon trains. The living was coarse and raw. Despite the hardships, Vacaville was brimming with wild game and plants that made life bearable to this town's earliest settlers 130 years ago.

Those who first settled here were in awe of Vacaville's natural abundance. They quickly took advantage of it and turned it into an immediate source of income for themselves.

One of Vacaville's earliest pioneers, William J. Pleasants, lived in a tent for one year when he came here in December 1850 while he killed bear and deer for the Sacramento market.

According to an article in the Solano Republican, the Daily Republic's predecessor, Pleasants counted 11 grizzly bears in miles of travel, and 100 deer in a day's hunt.

"It is needless to say, we killed both deer and bear whenever we pleased," Pleasants said.

Another pioneering family, the Mason Wilsons from Missouri, set up home here in their covered wagon next to a tiny spring-fed stream. Luzena Stanley Wilson described how her husband set about cutting the wild oats that grew in "rank profusion," and making hay, which was going for \$150 a ton in San Francisco. She in turn, set up an impromptu "hotel" for passing travelers.

"There we lived for the whole summer, six months or more without other shelter than the canvas wagon-cover at night and the roof of green leaves by day. Housekeeping was not difficult then, no fussing with servants or housecleaning, no windows to wash or carpets to take up," Wilson said in a memoir written by her daughter.

"I swept away the dirt with a

Homes were
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broom of willow switches, and the drawing room where I received my company was 'all out doors.' "

From the money they made, they bought lumber from Benicia, the commercial hub of Solano County, and built a home in 1852.

The land in Vacaville was dense with brush and roaming herds of "Spanish" cattle that covered the "whole country," according to Wilson. Even visiting a neighbor

was an ordeal, sometimes deadly back then.

Wilson described how she called upon her nearest neighbors, the Wolfskills, 12 miles away one morning with her two sons riding on horseback behind her:

"There were no roads, so I could select my path as I pleased, taking care only to avoid as much as possible the bands of Spanish cattle. . . . We were riding rapidly . . . when a sudden gust of wind took away the hat of one of the children, and as a hat was something precious, we must stop and get it. Then my little boy clambered down and climbed up again, in the face of the tossing heads, red eyes and spreading horns all about us."

In Vacaville, entertainment took the form of hunting, shooting matches and scrub-horse racing. Several years later, Wilson held dances in her dining room — "the largest room in the town" — for the "buxom

lads and lassies from 30 miles away."

The ladies arrived dressed in calico dresses and calf boots. "A ribbon was unusual," she said. "Their principal ornaments were good health and good nature."

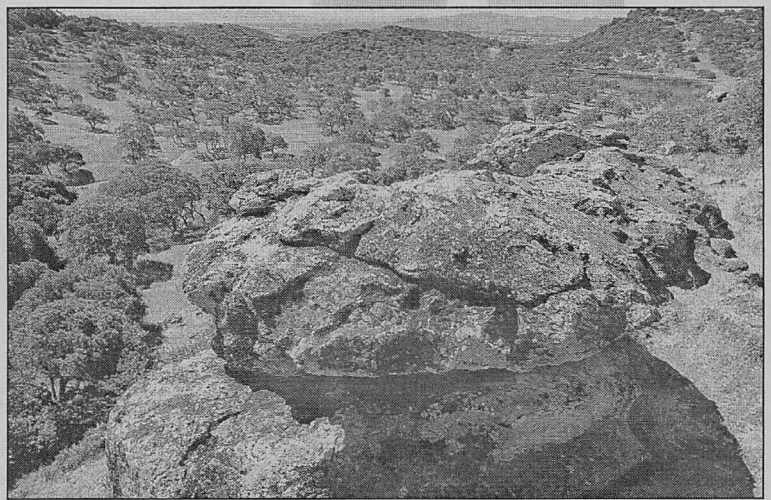
In succeeding years as the town became more civilized, Wilson noted with chagrin that the "young ladies come be-frizzled and montagued, with silk dresses, eight-button gloves and French slippers with Pompadour heels; the young men come in all the uninteresting solemnity of dress coats."

In Benicia, then the Solano County seat, one could buy goods reminiscent of genteel living.

Wilson recalled: "The trials and cares of the pioneer days are things of the past; the rags and tatters of my first days in California are well nigh forgotten in the ease and plenty of the present."

MOMENTS IN HISTORY

Events



Rockville Park was the site of a massacre in 1910.



Hatch Ranch

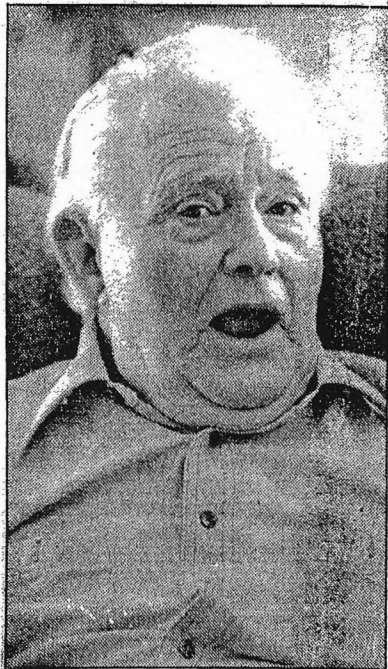
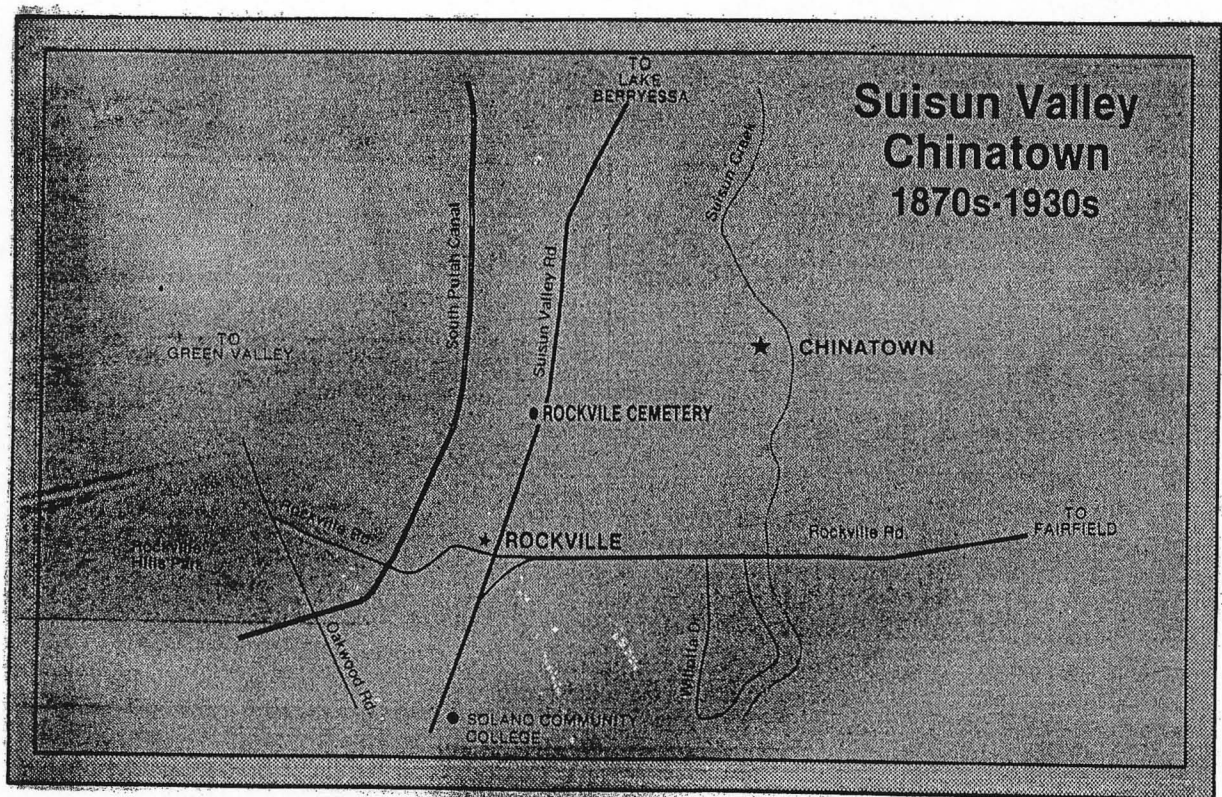
Site of long-ago Chinatown massacre eerie



The 11th and last person to die in the Hatch Ranch Massacre was Nellie Wong, front row, far left, shown here in a 1925 picture of Rockville School's six through eighth

grades. Fred Salsman, holding the dog, and Lewis Pierce III, front row, far right, were classmates of Wong. The 1928 massacre took place at Rockville's Chinatown.

Courtesy Photo



DR Photo by Gary Goldsmith

Fred Salsman

F AIRFIELD - An eerie solitude now inhabits what was once Suisun Valley's Chinatown.

Hidden by orchards and trees of Suisun Creek, the bygone hamlet four miles outside Fairfield was notorious for opium and gambling at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries.

Now two shacks, charred remains of another, bottles and junk mark the spot that at the turn of the century was the home of about 1,000 Chinese. It is a fitting tombstone for a town that on Aug. 22, 1928 witnessed one of the most heinous crimes this state has ever known.

Recalled Alletta Harris, age 74: "It was a shocking thing, especially out here in the country. It was so horrible nobody could believe it. I probably wouldn't have believed it if I hadn't seen it."

The Hatch Ranch Massacre was perhaps the biggest story to ever shake Solano County, recalled Arthur Garben Sr., 85. Garben added his memory of the good old days is of days not so good.

"There were a lot of murders back in those days," Garben said. "A lot of them went unsolved. There used to be a saying, 'If you want to commit a murder, go to Solano County.'"

But the distinction of the Hatch Ranch Massacre is that, as the Solano Republican reported 57 years ago, "No crime more horrible or ghastly could be imagined. Eleven people perished at the hands of Leong Ying, 32, in what the newspaper described as 'a wild orgy of butchering and shooting.'"

Alletta Harris was 17 the morning Chinese farmworkers brought news of the crime to the home of her stepfather, Jack Dahlstrom, caretaker of the Rockville Cemetery. Dahlstrom, who owned the nearest telephone to Chinatown, alerted Sheriff Jack Thornton.

"Jack Dahlstrom was my stepfather, but it was as if he was my own," said Harris. "The sheriff wanted him to go down there because he knew all the Chinese and could identify the bodies. I was to go along because my mother was away and Jack didn't want to leave me alone in the house. No one knew where the killer might be."

Harris' first memory of the scene of the crime was entering the home of Gee Wong or (because Chinese surnames appear first) Wong Gee.

"The first thing I saw was a girl on the floor - the only survivor, I believe," Harris said. "She recognized us and raised her head and smiled as if to say, 'Help is here at last.' Then she passed out."

The Solano Republican described the crime: "Deputy sheriffs Fraser and Lockie believe that the murderer first entered the underground gambling room where he shot Wong E. Gee and Cheung Yueng, whose bodies were found fully dressed and lying in bed."

"The bodies were still warm," recalled Harris. "They were just sitting there in chairs, laid back as though they were asleep. They had been playing cards in to the early morning

when they were killed. I don't know if I should say this, because it never came out, but the sheriff pulled up their pant legs and found opium taped to their legs."

Continued the Solano Republican: "The murderer then went to the house of Wong's brother, Wing Hong. The latter locked himself in a room and had crawled under the bed where the murderer broke through the window and shot him to death."

"From there he went across the orchard to a distance of approximately 200 yards toward the home of Wong Gee's family, and on his way shot and killed Yueng Soon."

"Then going to the home of the wife and children of Wong Gee he committed his most dastardly work. That the mother and wife had fought for her children was evident. She died with her two-week-old infant slain clasped in her arms."

"On the bed nearby was the four-year-old son of Wong Gee, who had not yet arisen, with his head crushed by a hatchet," said the newspaper.

Chung Way, Jim Low and Nellie Wong were also shot and

"There was a tong war going on in San Francisco and this was supposed to be an offspring from that," Garben said. "What the hell, nobody knew what's fair in a tong war."

Said Salsman: "It was said at the time there was a quarrel between the tongs. In those days they had tongs. They had a San Francisco tong and this was a tong. There had been some kind of misunderstanding or fight or something between them over opium. It was assumed opium ..."

He said Chinese were often associated with drugs in people's minds back then.

A Chinese person "wasn't thought of as a human being."

Fred

died in the Solano County Hospital, said the newspaper.

"After the bloody deed, the killer stopped the cutting shed where Chinese were cutting pears," Harris said. "He ate a pear or two - imagine that, after what he had done - and threatened to kill them all. Then he took off into the orchard."

Leong's motives remain a mystery.

The Solano Republican speculated the killer was "dope crazed," an explanation widely accepted but, according to Fred Salsman, 74, stereotypical. "When we thought of Chinese in those days we thought dope peddlers - dope fiends," Salsman recalled.

Both he and Garben believe the killings may have been part of a tong war.

Foon, in his 80s, declined to discuss the incident, calling it "bad history."

Chris Yee, born two years after the massacre, discounted the tong theory, saying the San Francisco tong wars subsided after 1910. He added the slayings may have been sparked by a family grudge.

Lewis Pierce III, 73, whose father maintained a bunkhouse of Chinese farm workers on their ranch, said their foreman Ah Charlie was head of the local tong in the early 1920s and had a \$50,000 price on his head.

Pierce remembered a day when he and his father drove up to the bunkhouse.

"There were three Chinese playing their guitars," he said. "Chinese guitars. Everything was quiet. I happened to look up to the second story and there were three guns pointing out. They always had guys watching there."

But Pierce, who said he "grew up" with the Chinese, dismissed the tong theory:

"It wasn't part of tong wars. He just went goofy."

What struck Pierce most about the murders was the ensuing manhunt in the county.

"Everybody was around blocking the roads all over," said Pierce. "I was only 16. I had a 30 ought six and they put me on the Suisun Creek bridge. I was all alone." In the course of those hours, Pierce said, a farm worker almost met his maker.

What no one knew until the next day was that Leong, leaving the orchard, jumped into his Dodge roadster parked on Suisun Valley

Rockville Park - site of a massacre in 1810



Nancy Dinger
Solano in retrospect

The year was 1810 when Spain's appointed governor to California ordered a young lieutenant, Gabriel Moraga, to lead an expedition north of the Carquinez Strait. Gov. Sola wanted to learn more about the northern territory and what exploitative value it had, if any.

The Spanish soldiers had a reputation, that preceded them, with the Native Americans as they worked their way through the Americas, conquering and converting.

Upon arrival to the southern banks of the Carquinez Strait, Moraga put his men to work building rafts of tule reeds to help in crossing with their horses, the most narrow section. As the soldiers, their horses, and rafts swam the deep channel, they were spotted by members of the Patwin tribe of Suisuns.

A runner was dispatched to Chief Malica, chief of the Suisuns, encamped at Yulyul. Yulyul was the permanent camp and home to the tribe's chief.

Malica gathered a large force to repel the feared and hated Spanish.



Mike McCoy/DAILY REPUBLIC

The Martin house became known as Stonedene and is located, to this day, across Cordelia Road from Solano Community College. It was the site of the Suisuns' old village and the place to which Francisco Solano returned.

As Moraga's troops made their way up the northern bank, urging their horses on, the Suisuns began their attack with poisoned arrows and spears. The Spanish fired back, scattering the Suisuns, who up 'til then had not seen or heard of gunpowder, let alone horses.

Malica quelled his warriors' fears and the Suisuns began a running attack against the better-armed and horse-mounted Spanish. This went on for three days. The Spanish kept advancing while the Suisuns contin-

ued their assault as they retreated toward Yulyul.

When Lt. Moraga and his embattled soldiers arrived at Yulyul, their blood was up after three days of killing. No mercy was shown toward Malica, his braves, women or children. The revered chief and remaining braves took up a defensive position in one of their huts. Moraga's men set it ablaze, killing all those inside. During the confusion, many of the Suisuns fled into the hills. Those who survived the major onslaught or

were unable to flee, became slaves.

In Moraga's report to the governor, he claimed that he tried to save the chief and his warriors, pleading with them to come out of the hut and surrender. Instead, he states that they all committed suicide, rather than surrender.

Yulyul was never the same again. The Suisun population never recovered to what it had been. It was in this raid that an 11-year-old boy and his friends were taken captive. The boys had been out hunting, when they spotted the smoke rising from Yulyul and hurriedly returned home to find the Spanish in charge and the village burned down.

What happened to the boys' families is not known. One can assume they were killed, since no mention was made in any record by Solano. Even at 11 years old, Sina, as he was called by his parents, was very tall for his age. As a captive, he was taken to Mission San Francisco in Yerba Buena (San Francisco) by Moraga, where he was baptized as Francisco Solano.

Years later, Solano would return to his people as a mission convert, able to read, write and keep accounts. As he obtained manhood, he stood at 6 feet, 7 inches. The Spanish missionaries had taken advantage of this tall young man to put him in charge of other neophytes. The Suisuns saw the advantage of his great height, as well, and recognized Solano as their new chieftain.

Massacre

From Page C1

The site of the Suisuns' old village at Yulyul was home-steaded by the Martin family. They built a fine stone house at the eastern edge of the property, near a frequented byway. It was to the Martin house that Solano, around 1860, returned. He had been absent from the area for about 10 years.

After a lengthy visit with his family and his friend, Mariano Vallejo at Sonoma, he elected to return to Yulyul. The Martin family later told Vallejo

that his friend arrived at their house with pneumonia and died shortly thereafter. They claimed to have buried him out near the road, under a Buckeye tree. The Martins said the great chief was buried under a cairn of stones, however, the site was lost in the "daily" farming activity.

The Martin house became known as Stonedene and is located, to this day, across Cordelia Road from Solano Community College. The actual site of Yulyul, with its petro-

glyphs and acorn grinding rocks, can be found at Rockville Park.

It was near the site of the Martin house and the Buckeye tree that the statue to Chief Solano was erected in 1934. The actual gravesite is shrouded in mystery. However, the ancient site of Yulyul still remains.

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Council Collection, Vacaville, California.

Author's note: I had hoped to find enough information about Cleo Gordon, whom the school was named after, to acquaint readers with her life. I have anecdotal stories, but no actual facts. If someone has newspaper clippings, or other information as to who she was, it would be greatly appreciated.

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Solano County ravaged by fire in past 130 years

By Kathleen L'Ecluse

Daily Republic Staff Writer

FAIRFIELD — Solano County, although not often ravaged by earthquakes and tornadoes, has had more than its share of fires in the past 130 years.

Many have occurred, some causing death and massive destruction and others only scorching a few acres, but a few stand above the rest as the most memorable.

July 13, 1909

Although firefighters didn't know quite how it began, they knew that a fire that destroyed nine downtown buildings and threatened even more started behind the A.H. Monroe drug store on the corner of Webster and Texas streets.

"Fairfield was visited by a disastrous conflagration early Tuesday," said the July 13 issue of the Solano Republican.

"The Fairfield fire company was soon at the scene of the fire but being utterly unable to cope with the flames, the Suisun fire department was called and responded with the gas engine and hose company."

Many have occurred, some causing death and massive destruction and others only scorching a few acres, but a few stand above the rest as the most memorable

The fire loss was estimated at about \$30,000. Some of the buildings destroyed included D. Silverstine's store, warehouse and stable; Mrs. S. Means millinery store; a cottage owned by C.E. Mayfield; and a two-story drug store owned by D.T. Ambrose.

Although numerous volunteers worked tremendously during the fire fight, the heroine appeared to be Gertie Lawlor, who first sounded the fire alarm.

According to the news report, when Lawlor heard the fire cry, she leapt from her bed and ran, barefoot, two blocks to the engine house and rang the fire bell. She then returned to the fire and helped put up a ladder at the Monroe drug store, giving the Monroe family,

who lived above the store, their only chance at escape.

Sept. 16, 1923

One of the first major grass fires, this blaze began on a Sunday morning and some patches of flames still glowed on Wednesday.

"Fires Burn Many Thousand Acres," proclaimed the headline in the Sept. 20 issue of the Solano Republican. "Stiff, dry, north wind precedes blaze and flames rush across large acreages with alarming speed."

The fire burned from the Bassford Ranch on Blue Ridge to Lagoon Valley, to the top of Twin Sisters, from Green Valley to Tolenas and ended at the Graves and Jones ranches nearly 2 miles from Cordelia.

About 21,000 acres burned causing \$61,000 in damage. Suisun City and Fairfield were ghost towns — citizens either left town or fought the fire. Volunteers from Suisun City, Fairfield, Cordelia, Benicia, Mare Island and the Benicia Arsenal fought the fire.

Among the losses were: Charles Campbell's car, which burned, and a cow belonging to Brenton Stewart, which was killed.

Sept. 2, 1961

All the county was ablaze in a grass fire that employed every firefighting unit in Solano County, plus some from outside the county, to fight the flames.

California Highway Patrol officers had to close Highway 12 because the smoke was so thick that drivers couldn't see and authorities feared some would suffocate.

An Allendale fire destroyed more than two houses. A Travis fire scorched both sides of the runway at the Air Force base. A Leisure Town fire sucked up most of the water from the Elmira Fire District engines so they had little remaining to fight another blaze in Elmira and a grass fire near the Nut Tree.

Old Archive Story

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Body:

Nation galvanized as jury prepares to make history

By Andrew LaMar

of the Daily Republic

FAIRFIELD - President Kennedy's assassination. The moon landing. The start of Desert Storm.

They are moments in history when Americans stopped what they were doing - whatever they were doing - to watch an event unfold.

While the verdict in the O.J. Simpson murder trial may not compare in historical significance, it ranks right up there in public interest, according to some experts. This morning's reading of the verdict is expected to attract tens of millions of viewers and listeners nationwide, whether at school, work or home.

The trial has captured the public's imagination like no other since the kidnapping and murder of Charles Lindbergh's son in 1932, according to Ben Bagdikian, former dean of the School of Journalism at the University of California, Berkeley.

I don't think it's the greatest (attention-getter), but there's no question it will be big," Bagdikian said.

Unlike some of the century's biggest events - such as the end of World War II and Kennedy's assassination - the verdict won't bring everyone to a standstill, Bagdikian added.

Local schools won't break to watch or listen to the verdict announcement and will treat today no differently than any other morning, said Darrel Taylor, superintendent of the Fairfield-Suisun Unified School District.

"We're not going to treat this as some big significant event, because we don't think it is," Taylor said. "Again, we want to protect our instruction time. We want our teachers to protect our instruction time."

However, some classes that are studying related subjects, such as social studies, may discuss or view the verdict, Taylor said. That decision will likely be left to teachers, he added.

Because news of the verdict's announcement came late in the day Monday, it left no time to prepare, others said. Companies with large work forces probably will not interrupt the workday to watch the news, many said.

"I don't know what the plans are, if any," said Fred Reicker, corporate spokesman for the Clorox Co., which has a plant in Fairfield.

The trial has generated so much interest because it touches on many deep-seated societal problems, Bagdikian said.

"There's no question the audience will be huge and the reaction fierce," Bagdikian said. "It's incredibly dramatic."

How people will react will depend on the verdict, said Carl Jorgensen, an assistant professor of sociology at the University of California, Davis, who specializes in race relations.

Sociologically, I think O.J. had his chance in court. He has had his chance with a diverse jury," Jorgensen said.

How the Los Angeles Police Department handles - or doesn't - the racism uncovered in the trial may have a much larger impact on the public, Jorgensen said.

Old Archive Story

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Body:

Fairfield, Travis

- some history

It's high time that local citizens found out how Fairfield annexed Travis Air Force Base and how much the annexation has been worth to Fairfield in a monetary sense.

When Fairfield decided to annex Travis, the city limit was at Dover Avenue. The base had to be adjacent to Fairfield in order to annex it. The base happened to be six miles up Air Base Parkway - a long way from Fairfield.

Fairfield used a ``cherry stem" annexation, going out Air Base Parkway to grab the base. They didn't have the police force at the time to cover the business area outside the gate, so left that area in the county under the sheriff's protection.

With the annexation, the city's population grew by about 13,000 to 35,000. Since then, when you see Fairfield's population, subtract about 12,000 for the base to obtain the city's true population.

Fairfield grabbed the base to increase the city's gas tax share from the state from 22,000 to 35,000 citizens. Fairfield used that gas tax money to keep the city's streets in good shape. None of it was spent on the streets of Travis, as our federal taxes continued to provide the funds through the Department of Defense. At the same time, \$350,000 that the county could have used to improve the road to an industrial area at Collinsville went to improve the interchange at Peabody Road. The county road tax that should have improved the county roads was used by the county to help Fairfield. Why?

The answer given: Fairfield would not have annexed the base if the county had not provided the road fund. I think Fairfield would have annexed the base if there were only a dirt road going out there. They wanted the gas tax to use on their city streets.

When Fairfield's population (including Travis) reached 50,000, Fairfield was entitled to additional help from the state. The idea is that a city of over 50,000 needs additional funding to handle problems associated with a larger city. All these years that Fairfield has received this money from the annexation of Travis, they haven't provided a thing to Travis other than good will, which of course all other cities of the county have provided. It's true that the base has not demanded those services.

(Former Fairfield Mayor) Mr. Falati has told me that if a city doesn't grow, it dies. The city I come from in New York celebrated its centennial in 1933. The city had grown by 2,000 in that time. Today the population is 17,000, up 7,000 from 1833. The manufacturing is many times greater than Fairfield's.

Several years ago the combined cities of Fairfield and Suisun increased the sewer plant's capacity to the population expected by the Association of Bay Area Governments for 2010.

I asked the city's finance officer some time ago about whether the cities could pay off their sewer bonds if no more homes or commercial buildings were built after that night.

He answered no, they would not have the funds to pay off the bonds if growth stopped. Mr. Falati jumped up and said if the cities did as I suggested, their citizens would have to pay off the bonds by higher sewer taxes.

This shows that Fairfield must continue this all-out building to pay off the bonds. They don't seem to care that they don't have adequate police, fire or schools. Suisun is in worse shape than Fairfield - they lack adequate streets too. Fairfield wants another railroad station at Vanden and Peabody. If they don't get the population they want in back of Travis, they won't have the population to sustain the building. Why should they build another railroad station about four

miles from the one just rebuilt in Suisun, at a great expense to the taxpayers of Suisun?

It's time the city wakes up to the fact that all the citizens of the county, including those of Fairfield, want the city to stop this crazy plan for Travis. It's time Fairfield citizens ask your City Council how many of them have been aided in their campaigns for office by the developers pushing this annexation. Don Dowling

Suisun City

YMCA fee might

wait for pool

At a special meeting of the Suisun City Council on May 30 at 5 p.m., an additional \$295,000 was approved for YMCA to cover costs of project delays and additional improvements.

I asked YMCA Executive Director Steve McIntire about a recent notice mailed to YMCA members stating the activation of the monthly fee on May 15. When some families registered, they were told that the monthly fee won't start being charged until the swimming pool is completed. The pool won't open until June 30. Mr. McIntire stated that those members who were told so, when they registered, can call the YMCA and the YMCA will consider charging them the monthly fee starting on the opening day of the pool, not May 15.

YMCA is an excellent community organization. Suisun City is proud to have it as a business partner.

Pete M. Sanchez

Suisun City

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Old Archive Story

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Body:

FDR plus V-E Day led to U.N. -

and maybe an end to polio soon

In 1995, it seems we are celebrating the 50th anniversary of everything - which I guess means that 1945 remains one of the most remarkable years ever.

Last week we celebrated the 50th anniversary of V-E Day. In April we commemorated the 50th anniversary of the death of Franklin D. Roosevelt. Next month we will observe the 50th anniversary of the founding of the United Nations. The conjunction of these anniversaries is not coincidental; the events that we honor were closely related. The horror and devastation of World War II prompted postwar leaders to found the United Nations. And you cannot discuss World War II without a discussion of FDR, the commander-in-chief of the United States Armed Forces.

But there is another subtle relationship here - the relationship between FDR and the U.N.'s greatest accomplishment. It remains perhaps the greatest accomplishment in human history.

It may surprise some people that a branch of the U.N. is responsible for this great achievement. After all, it was fashionable in the Reagan years to bash the United Nations. I still see signs along the road that say "U.S. out of U.N."

Frightening right-wing militia kooks follow the conspiracy theories that there are U.N. troops in the United States, that somehow the U.N. will lead to a world government that will take away our rights. Meanwhile, the United States always falls behind on our payments to support the U.N.

But the World Health Organization, the public health outreach of the United Nations, eradicated smallpox, a scourge that plagued humans throughout history. If the U.N. does nothing else in its history, the triumph of its WHO over this ancient horror will have justified its existence.

This is an interesting story. In 1796, a British physician, Edward Jenner, recognized that intentional inoculation with the related cowpox vaccine conferred an immunity against the smallpox virus. This vaccine rid the United States of smallpox.

In 1967, though, smallpox was still considered an endemic, ever-present illness. A 10-year global campaign by the WHO eliminated the disease from the Western Hemisphere by 1971, then eradicated the disease in Indonesia, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and finally Africa. The last case of wild smallpox occurred in Somalia in 1977.

This was the first example of a disease eliminated by modern medicine.

The World Health Organization has chosen polio as the next target for eradication. The WHO has set an ambitious goal of eradicating polio by the year 2000. The disease remains widespread in tropical Asia and Africa.

Immunization efforts have already eliminated wild polio from the Western Hemisphere, Australia and Western Europe. The WHO is aiding the remaining countries with their immunization efforts. China inoculated 100 million children in December 1993 and followed up with an additional dose a few months later. Efforts in the Indian subcontinent and in Africa may prove more difficult.

But the WHO and UN are determined, and if they get the resources they need, they could pull it off. Polio could be eliminated in five years.

The story of polio brings us back to Roosevelt.

Poliomyelitis struck FDR in 1925 when he was 38. Yet he overcame the physical and mental challenges of the disease to become a New York legislator, New York governor and then president. Most of the country didn't know the president couldn't walk.

Roosevelt inherited a fascinating time in American history. Most presidents must cope with a crisis; FDR inherited two of the greatest crises ever faced by a president. After steering America through the Great Depression, he was challenged by Hitler's assault on democracy.

FDR saw that the United States would have to play a major role in the defeat of fascism; at the time, most Americans wanted to stay isolated. He was right. Sadly, he did not live to see the triumph he helped engineer. He died before V-E Day.

FDR's efforts against polio led to the establishment of the March of Dimes by his law partner. The March of Dimes provided much of the research funding that led to the development of the polio vaccines that have eliminated the disease in our hemisphere.

In this year of 50th anniversaries, we can celebrate the triumph of democracy over the Axis powers, salute FDR, applaud the achievements of the United Nations, celebrate peace, and look forward to the eradication of polio in the near future.

For FDR and the United Nations, the eradication of polio will serve as their legacy. Jim DeKloe, who teaches biology at Solano Community College and chairs the Solano Group of the Sierra Club, lives in Fairfield. jimdekloe@aol.com

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18c1Dingler

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Body:

COURTESY PHOTO/Vacaville Heritage Council

This is how Armijo High School looked between 1893 and 1929. On Oct. 24, 1929, it was destroyed by fire.

COURTESY PHOTO/The Heritage Collection

The Solano County Library (which today houses county offices) was completed in 1931. The previous library, housed on the second floor of the high school, was destroyed in the 1929 fire.

COURTESY PHOTO/The Heritage Collection

The "new" Armijo High School was completed in 1930. It became the county courthouse in 1970, when the present high school campus was built.

The day Armijo High School burned down

The fall of 1929 was turning out to be quite a year for the country, and for Fairfield, as well.

Black Thursday - Oct. 24 - had brought about the stock market crash. People all over the country, whether they had the financial means or not, had invested in the market.

As the country went into an economic tailspin, President Herbert Hoover was trying to deal with the crisis. As October slipped into November and December, it became a sad holiday time for most families, yet life continued on.

On Sunday afternoon, Dec. 8, Professor J.E. Brownlee and Athletic Director Buck Bailey were getting ready to leave Armijo High School. The school had hosted guest athletes from the Italia Virtus Club of San Francisco earlier that day. The San Francisco group was going over the course for the Fairfield-Vallejo marathon race, to be held on the 22nd.

As Brownlee and Bailey were locking up in preparation for Sunday dinner at home, they smelled smoke. The two men immediately investigated and found the locker room of the building ablaze, with smoke pouring out.

The alarm was sounded at 12:45 and both Fairfield and Suisun fire departments were summoned.

Fairfield Fire Chief Matt Knolty and his firemen were on the scene in exactly 40 seconds from the sounding of the alarm by Buck, who made the run from the school to the firehouse, on Texas Street "in nothing flat."

The blaze spread rapidly throughout the wooden Queen Ann-style building. The raging flames inside the structure prevented firemen from entering. The fire ladders added to the firefighter's frustration, because they were not long enough to scale the walls.

Additional help was summoned from Vacaville, who sent an engine and a squad of firemen, headed by assistant Chief L.H. Parker. Fire Chief Otterson of Napa arrived and took charge of the efforts to stem the blaze.

Not only did Fairfield lose its high school, but the County Free Library that had been housed for 15 years, on the second floor, had almost all the contents destroyed. The library had been a labor of love and huge effort by many people in the community and it was heartwrenching to see so much damage.

Men, women and children flew to the fire and heroically worked to save what could be safely removed from the flames. The days of salvaging that followed were made more difficult by the fact that the weather turned to rain.

Jagged walls, charred openings, were all that were left, where doors had been. Cracked ceilings, sagging book shelves, muddy pools on the remaining floors in which floated valuable reference volumes, met the eye at every turn.

The library bureau cabinets teetered at precarious angles, or had already toppled over, in the muddy water. New books lay in masses of pulp and everything dripped, dripped and dripped in the soft falling rain.

The first thought among most everyone, was of hopelessness, it seemed as if the years of labor had gone for naught. Distressing as the plight of the high school and library were, people went into action, to take to safety the volumes that had been rescued.

The catalog drawers had been hastily lifted out of windows, during the fire, as had been the branch and shelf list records. Though the records had been badly damaged by water, they were found to be legible when dried.

The goal was to locate library property, collect it and find a place in which to house the salvaged books. The American Legion in Suisun stepped up to the plate and offered its building for use until such a time as a permanent home would be provided.

Months were spent in clearing up losses, sorting damaged from worthless material, and finally computing exact records of loss. The loss to the Armijo High School District was estimated at more than \$200,000.

The County Library, alone, suffered a loss of more than \$150,000, of which only \$15,000 was covered by insurance.

The High School moved into temporary quarters scattered about the city. Classes were established in the Fairfield Firemen's Club rooms, the Methodist Church, and four rooms of the Fairfield Grammar School, as well as the Community Club in Suisun and a few others.

Professor Brownlee offered his opinion that the fire had begun because of faulty wiring. However, a well-informed fire insurance adjuster, believed that the fire was of incendiary origin, pointing out that it was the 11th public building to be destroyed within a short period of time in Northern California.

The insurance adjuster went on to inform the local citizenry that a certain chemical could have been placed in the attic of the building on Saturday afternoon, after the library officials had gone home. In approximately 24 hours, the chemical would ignite, assuring a fire.

Architects flocked to town to offer their services in the rebuilding of a modern high school and library.

Coupled with the insurance money and the tireless pleadings of many citizens, some prominent, the funds were raised for the new library. The funds for construction of the new high school were not near as difficult to come by, as those for the new library.

The cost of the land was not an issue, because the property had been given to the city back in 1858 by Robert Waterman so that the county seat could be moved from Benicia. The librarians had hoped for a design that would have some California historical significance and were quite pleased when the Spanish style was chosen. This was the first County Library building that stood on its own, not part of the high school. However, the second floor did house offices for agricultural services to serve the community.

The "new" Armijo High eventually became the courthouse building at the corner of Texas Street and Union Avenue. The current Armijo High is across the street. The "new" library is currently occupied by county offices, having moved to larger quarters on Kentucky Street in the 1970s.

Note: The decision as to what is to become of the old courthouse and library will be under discussion by the Fairfield City Council, June 4 at 7 p.m. Local historical groups are rallying to ask for a county museum be established in Fairfield for the repository of historical artifacts, photos, and stories that are in the hands of private individuals, so that the community's citizens, particularly school children, might have the opportunity to learn about Fairfield-Suisun and Solano County's rich past. If you are interested, please attend. To have such a gem of repository would certainly be a wonderful addition to the city.

References: Solano College Oral History Program Interview with Mrs. Maryalice Maxwell by M.C. Low (available the library); "Solano County Free Library History" by Clara B. Dills; Fairfield Enterprise, Dec. 9, 1929.

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17c1Nancy

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Body:

Flu pandemic mows down young and old alike

Early in the spring of 1918, the front pages of the Fairfield Enterprise began printing more frequent obituary notices of prominent or well-known elderly pioneers and some infants.

The interior pages of the paper were peppered with death notices of the lesser known, or indigent. Little did the quiet city realize, or for that matter, any quiet city or large metropolitan area realize, that they were going to be swept by a disease so virulent, that its kind had not been seen since the European bubonic plague.

The "Spanish flu," as it became to be known, was far more reaching than the plague and before spent, would kill an estimated 20 to 40 million people.

More than an epidemic, because of its world-wide devastation, it was pandemic. In the two years that this scourge ravaged the earth, a fifth of the world's population was infected.

The flu was most deadly for the 20- to 40-year-age group. Usually flu (influenza) struck at the most vulnerable, the elderly and young children, so it was especially alarming to be striking at the usually healthy age group.

The flu infected 28 percent of all Americans. An estimated 675,000 died, 10 times as many as in the world war. And 43,000 U.S. soldiers, in Europe, died of the influenza virus. The effect of the pandemic was so severe that the average life span in the U.S. was depressed by 10 years.

At the time, no one knew the flu's origin or cause.

Fear and panic gripped the public. Some blamed Germany. It was suspected that the Kaiser had sent spies to deliberately seed Boston Harbor with influenza germs.

Lending misguided credence to this theory, was Lt. Col. Philip Doane, head of the health and sanitation section of the Emergency Fleet Corp., opined that the epidemic might have been started by Germans put ashore from U-boats.

"It would be quite easy for one of these German agents to turn loose influenza germs in a theater or some other place where large numbers of persons are assembled," he wrote.

In January of 1918, the Solano County supervisors approved the plans for a new county hospital. Local boys who had gone off to war were returning with wounds and lungs seared by mustard gas.

The need for a hospital was quite apparent. Unfortunately, it would not be completed until after the devastating virus swept through the community, mowing down rich and poor, young and old, or wounded and hale.

Perhaps the local contagion began with the returning wounded or from a lecturer. In April of 1918, Lt. Foster was the guest lecturer at Crystal Auditorium in Suisun, telling of his experiences at the battlefield. However and whoever brought the flu to Solano, it soon swept through local communities.

The U.S. Public Health Service faced the challenge of educating the public about an illness that was largely a mystery. By October of that year, The Fairfield Enterprise printed on the front page "Uncle Sam's Advice on Flu."

The story from Surgeon General Rupert Blue stated that the flu was probably not Spanish in origin. The article was quite lengthy, going into the history of influenza, then explaining the symptoms and how it was spread and what to do if you got sick.

"It is very important that every person who becomes sick with influenza should go home at once and go to bed. This will help keep away dangerous complications, and will at the same time, keep the patient from scattering the disease far and wide."

In November, H. Seyler of the Grove barber shop in Fairfield received a letter from his brother in Texas. Mr. Seyler's brother wrote that a doctor, nurse and army officer were arrested for spreading the flu.

"The third degree was being given the doctor to bring out more information, if possible. The doctor was arrested in a "Y" hut and a revolver and a vial of germ fluid were taken from him." As provocative as Mr. Seyler's letter was, there seemed to be no wide, or well-known knowledge of this episode.

The front page of the Enterprise was almost nothing but obituaries. In October, Navy enlistee William Vann was reported to be recovering from the flu in an Eastern Army hospital.

Not so lucky was the 18-year-old son of Daniel and Ida Ambrose, who succumbed. So too, was the well-liked and well-known Adolph Widenmann, who had been appointed just the week before by the governor of California to the post of county Supervisor to fill the vacancy caused by the death of Mr. Widenmann's brother.

In November, Mrs. Oscar Van Bulen of Cement City died, leaving behind a grieving husband and two children, a boy, 7, and a girl, 3. Miss Nellie Keym of Oakland, who was in her 20s, had come for a visit. Upon returning home, she contracted the flu, which turned into pneumonia (the usual complication) and died.

Earl C. Smith, an employee of the Southern Pacific Co., died in the Oakland Hospital after complications from the flu, leaving behind a wife and three small children. The family was visiting relatives in Texas when their father became ill, and were not permitted to leave because of quarantine. To compound the tragedy, Earl's brother died in the same hospital the same week from the same complications.

The town trustees, in a special meeting in early November, ordered the poolroom be closed as a precautionary measure against the spread of the virus. By December, the last month of such a terrible year, Henry and Kathryn Goosen suffered a terrible blow.

neir eldest son, Victor, just 20 years old, succumbed on Christmas morning. Henry Goosen was a self-made man who went into the hardware store business and eventually owned the Fairfield water works. The Goosens' restored home graces Empire Street in Fairfield.

The flu would finally peter out by the spring of 1919, but not until it caused widespread heartache and grief. The county hospital was completed by 1920.

References: Fairfield Enterprise, January-December 1918, January-June 1919.

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21c1Dingler

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Body:

Fairfield awakens from sleepy town status in 1942

The eventful year of 1942 affected everyone in the world, including the quiet little hamlet of Fairfield.

The Army Airfield (Later named Travis Air Force Base) was under full construction and use. Permit applications for new apartment construction for the expanding population was granted.

The high school graduating classes of 1941 and '42 scrapped their plans and went to war, both at home and at the battlefronts. Teachers, electricians and ranchers left their occupations, families and homes to join the fight.

Money for the war was raised through different "drives," along with Victory Books and Victory Gardens - everyone pitched in. Then, there were the dispossessed. Japanese families who had lived and worked in the area for generations were ordered to leave everything behind to be concentrated in "camps." Their stressful and tragic stories were also part of the fabric of local life and history.

In January, barely a month into the war effort, Pauline Edwards, the Martha Stewart of her day, began a new theme on her "All American" radio show entitled, "Defense Begins at Home." More than 100,000 rural women were going to learn about all-in-one oven meals, home defense, vitamins and other essential survival tips for the war's duration.

The Jan. 8 edition of the Solano Republican reported that while Armijo and Rio Vista high school football teams were battling each other on the gridiron Friday afternoon, plans were also in the works on Saturday for a series of fund-raisers. To celebrate the 60th birthday of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, there would be a March of Dimes drive.

There was a drive to collect money for U.S. savings bonds. The Red Cross reported by Jan. 29 their drive had been a great success, having collected \$3,403.00 toward war relief. Even the Girl Scouts helped by selling more than \$200 worth of defense stamps and bonds in two days.

A Junior Red Cross program was begun locally with students getting into the act by way of a book drive. The "Victory Book Drive" would supply books to the soldiers and sailors, at home and abroad.

In the same week, it was reported that Carl Gein Jr., son of Mr. and Mrs. Gein of Suisun Valley, had quit his job as athletic coach at Ukiah High School, where he had taught for two years after graduating from Armijo and later, Chico State. Young Carl was stationed at Bakersfield as a Flying Cadet.

The Jan. 15 paper ran a story about "Sheriff John R. Thornton having collected from Suisun Valley Japanese, Italian and German nationals, 50 rifles and shotguns, 100 radios and 100 cameras of various sizes and value. Many of the radios now in the local bastille office, were taken from automobiles."

In March the front page news was about workmen needed at the Hunter Corp. in Suisun to fulfill its defense contract to build boats. Also in that month, sirens were sounded to alert everyone in Suisun and Fairfield that a blackout was being held. This was the third drill and was deemed a success in that two minutes after the signal, the area was totally dark with an exception on Texas Street, where someone left a locked car with its headlights on. Unidentified planes over the Bay Area were given as the cause for the dark signal order.

April saw the evacuation order for all Japanese from Solano County. They were ordered to have only bedding, clothing and a small amount of table silver, toilet articles and other unrestricted articles for their "stay." The Japanese of Suisun Valley and throughout California had until May 3 to dispose of their homes, businesses and farms or be subject to arrest and be "treated as an enemy alien under heavy penalty."

By May the call went out for marksmen to start a local militia group. Particularly sought were men from the farms and ranches who owned hunting rifles and shotguns and who were skilled marksmen. Gov. Olson declared, "that they will be used only in event of enemy attack or invasion."

June brought the call for adult emergency help for farm workers. Most of the men had gone to war, or had been taken away as "Japanese infiltrators," leaving a terrible shortage of farm laborers. "There are some Filipino workers, but not enough. All women who are not working are asked to register and men are asked to register for weekend work. It has been emphasized that this work should be looked upon as a patriotic service essential to the war effort."

"NOTICE!! Air Wardens! If you are an Air Warden and for any reason it is necessary for you to leave town, you are urgently requested to notify the chief of police or Joe Serpas at the O.K. Sweet Shop. This is positively essential and is issued by order of the Fairfield City Council."

A shipment of yarn was sent by the Red Cross National Headquarters for the completion of comfort kits. The kits consisted of sweaters, scarves and socks. "Your help is needed, so don't fail the Red Cross, as well as the boys."

"Mrs. F.A. Starmer received word from her brother, Martin (Sparky) Jacobson, from Norfolk, Va. Martin is the eldest son of Peter Jacobson of Fairfield . . . He graduated from Armijo High School more than a dozen years ago and has since been in the employ of PG&E . . . He enlisted in the Navy more than two months ago and is rated as a First Class Electrician's Mate."

As the year began to draw to a close, the bond drives continued to expand with the Christmas Seals to fight tuberculosis. During the year, 20 people in Solano County alone had died of the disease.

Word was received that Robert Spohn, son of Mr. and Mrs. O. C. Spohn of Fairfield, was awarded the coveted Navy Wings of Gold and commissioned an ensign in the U.S. Naval Reserve at the Naval Air Training Center, Corpus Christi, Texas. A 1938 graduate of Armijo, who went on to San Bernardino JC and the University of Idaho . . . he was a bookkeeper at the Noah Adams Lumber Co. here."

Dec. 17: After many months of anxious waiting, Mr. and Mrs. Roy J. Sheldon received a cablegram giving meager information of their only child, 1st Lt. Milton Jerome Sheldon's whereabouts. It was "the first word they have had since the fall of Bataan when Gen. Wainright and his brave army were forced to surrender."

Unfortunately, young Jerome died in the P.O.W. camp after the infamous forced 70-mile march. His remains were returned in 1948 when a formal military funeral was held, complete with caisson followed by 150 cars.

The year ended with the crash of another U.S. army plane, which slammed into a mist-enshrouded Napa ridge. This was the second crash, the other occurring near Twin Sisters, in less than a year. The planes were patrolling the skies for Japanese incursions.

The young airmen "had given their last full measure to their country." Fairfield would never be a sleepy little hamlet ever again. This was a pivotal moment in history that changed everything.

Special thanks for preparation of this story to Jerry Bowen and Bob Allen of the Vacaville Heritage Council who provided photos.

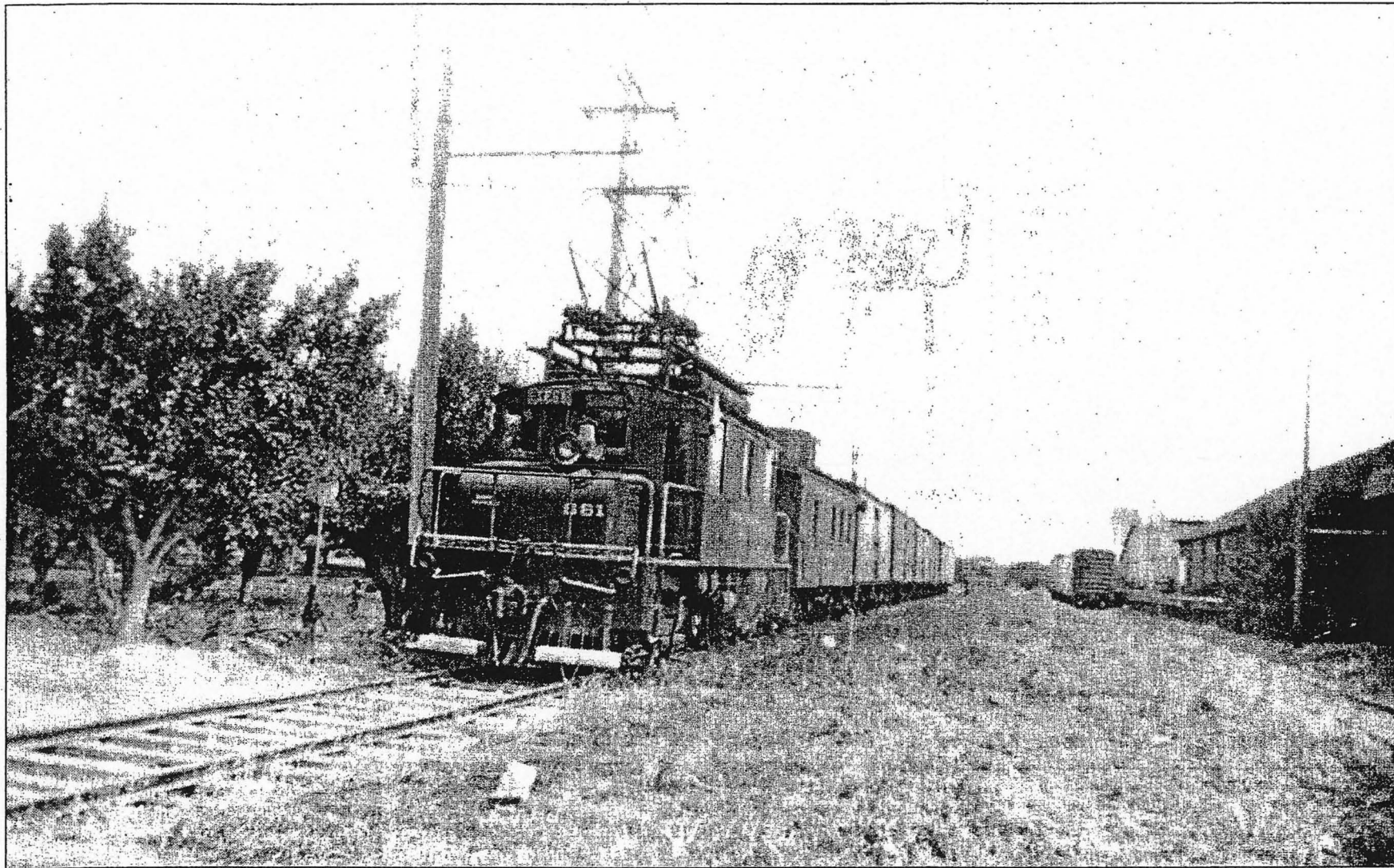
Reference: Solano Daily Republican - Jan. 8 through to Dec. 30, 1942.

Note: If you have a story with photos about someone who has contributed to their community over time, please contact History_Whiz10@yahoo.com.

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Section C
LIVING

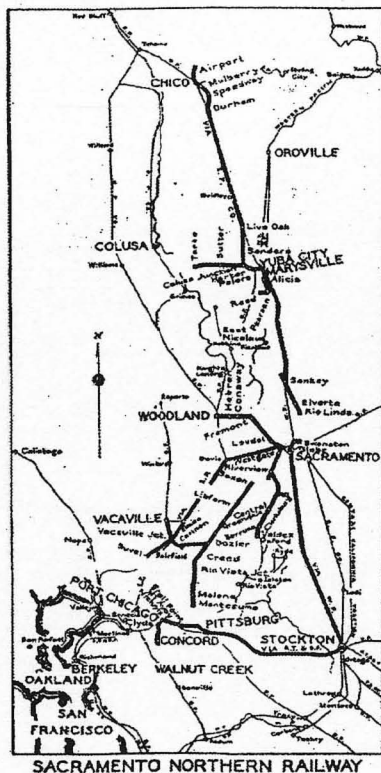
SATURDAY, JANUARY 25, 2003 • DAILY REPUBLIC



COURTESY PHOTO/Western Railway Museum

Sacramento Northern's engine 661 travels the Willota line near packing sheds in the 1920s.

When **RAILROADS** *reigned in Solano County*



With all the recent concerns over congestion on Solano County's freeways, it is interesting to note that historically, at one time, mass transit was readily available.



Nancy Dingler
Solano in retrospect

Solano County was serviced by the Southern Pacific trains, and by electric railways running from Vallejo to Sacramento. Solano and Sacramento counties were dotted with

sparsely populated communities, some of which failed utterly and disappeared into the dust of time.

Because of the vast stretches of agricultural "nothingness," Southern Pacific wanted to get, as quickly as possible, from San Francisco to Sacramento, bypassing the small towns completely.

The Vallejo and Northern electric railway began in 1906. It was the



COURTESY PHOTO/Western Railway Museum

This is a postcard from the 1920s. Note the wires above the Suisun's Main Street for the electric car's catenary.

brainchild of Melville Dozier. The plan was to connect the towns of Northern California's upper Sacramento Valley with San Francisco.

At the heart of this scheme were two parallel north-south mainlines,

one up the center of the valley from Sacramento to Chico, the other running up the west side between Woodland, Colusa and Hamilton.

East-west branches would tie these two mainlines together, forming a huge ladder.

president of the Vallejo and Northern, Dozier acquired terminal sites in Vacaville, Fairfield, Suisun and Vallejo. The remains of the right of way, in Fairfield, is the hiking-bicycle trail that intersects housing tracts and streets to the south of the mall.

Unfortunately, there was a financial panic in 1907, which completely stopped work on the line until 1909.

Under the new management of T.C.C. Gregory, grading of the proposed line commenced at the Vallejo terminal, just north of the Monticello Steamship Co.'s dock.

From 1909, over the next eight years, many parts of the ambitious scheme were constructed. The eastern mainline was opened between Chico and Sacramento with branches reaching Woodland, Colusa, Hamilton and Oroville.

The western leg of the ladder was never built due to tight money. By 1918 the company was reorganized again and became the Sacramento Northern Railroad.

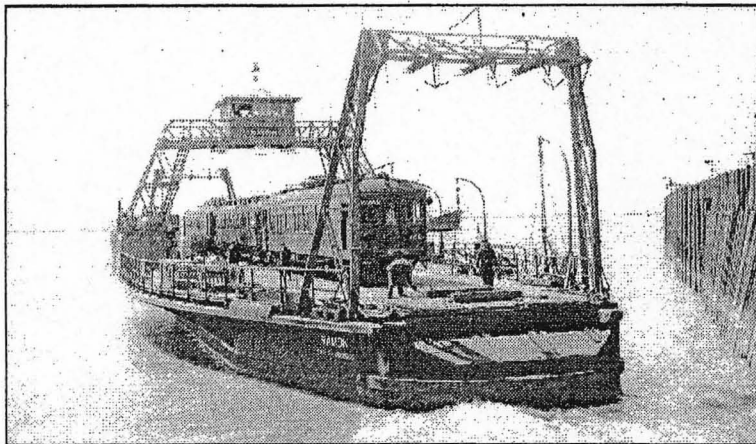
In 1911, while it was still the Vallejo and Northern, grading and construction of what was to be known as the Willotta branch, began.

It was not, however, until 1913 that track was actually laid down and steam trains operated from the Suisun dock to a point 6 miles north of Fairfield. By June, of the same year, the line was electrified and regular electric train service started.

How did the electric trains get their power? There was not a long extension cord nor did they run on batteries. They connected directly to the electrical current, much the same as model trains or the subway trains, such as BART do today.

On the branch that ran from Fairfield to Vacaville, there was an open third rail — a "hot" rail. The rail car had a metal "shoe," which came in contact with this rail. Because the area was very rural and open, there was not much chance that a human would stray onto the hot rail.

Occasionally, the stray critter might and that would be



COURTESY PHOTO/Western Railway Museum

The Ramon was a link between Solano and Contra Costa counties.

the last time it would make that mistake. However, in towns, such as Fairfield and Suisun, where the trains ran down the main street, they would get their electrical connection via a catenary.

The catenary was a device built into the roof of the rail car that would telescope up like scissors. There were little "wheels" attached to the catenary, which would run along the overhead wires, making contact and supplying electricity to the rail car's engines. When daylight would wane and while the rail cars were still running, you could see the blue spark of electricity snapping along the wires as the catenary came in contact.

Passenger service in Suisun, ended at the Plaza, but the tracks continued to a dock, on the slough, which was navigable by shallow draft steamers and barges.

Freight operations, at least during the early years, saw quite a bit of cargo transferred between rail and water.

The tracks crossed the Southern Pacific main line just west of the SP's Suisun-Fairfield station. The branch also crossed the line of the Cement Tolenas and Tidewater (CT&T), which served the Pacific Portland Cement Co.'s plant near Tolenas (Cement City).

Crossing another competitor's rail line was not really the thing to do without getting into a lot of trouble.

The Vallejo and Northern seems to have missed the usual drama that attended other attempts of electric railways to cross steam railroad

lines. The Southern Pacific gave no trouble, and the CT&T, much to the surprise of its operating crews, found the electric railway crossing one cold frosty morning in 1913.

The Vallejo and Northern crew had placed the crossing in the dead of night and no further objection seemed to have been made. The Northern Electric Railway's Suisun-Vacaville Branch employees' timetable of 1915 instructed all trains to come to a full stop at these crossings and be flagged over by the conductor or flagman.

Competition by the Oakland, Antioch and Eastern, resulted in the merger of the Northern Electric system with the OA&E's system, which eventually led to the change of ownership to the Sacramento Northern (SN).

Following the merger, the SN entered its most interesting period of history. Express trains with parlor cars operated between Oakland, Sacramento and Chico, bearing the names like Comet and Meteor.

Suisun Bay created a water barrier, which was surmounted by the construction of the huge barge, Ramon. The Ramon could accommodate at least three electric railcars on the approaches from Chipps on the Solano side, to Mallard in Contra Costa County.

Unfortunately, the Great Depression struck soon after the merger, severely cutting passenger receipts. More traffic was lost to automobiles.

In a last grasp at passenger business, the SN began operating directly into San Francisco via the lower deck of the new

Oakland Bay Bridge in 1939. Even this could not stop the red ink, and all interurban passenger service ended in 1941.

The last streetcar operation at Chico ended in 1947. The SN remained an electrified freight line through most of WWII, though often aided by Western Pacific's new diesel switchers. Finally, the last electrified section, between Marysville and Yuba City, was dieselized in 1965, ending interurban electric freight operations.

Special thanks to Bart Nadeau, curator of the Western Railway Museum, who helped tremendously with supplying photos and text to complete this column. I want to acknowledge the generosity of Dick McClenaghan who supplied me with a CD chock full of color photos of the Sacramento Northern Key System.

References: Sacramento Northern: through the Sacramento Valley by Ira L. Swett
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California State Railroad Museum Library
Bay Area Electric Railroad Association

Solano Republican: March-July 1904, April 1905, December 1906, February and September 1907, September and November 1911, February, May, September and October 1912, June-December 1913.

Special note: This year the city of Fairfield is going to be celebrating 100 years since incorporation. The township needed a new sewer and decided to expedite the solution by becoming a city. Plans are in the works to celebrate the centennial later this year. Everyone is invited to participate in this historic year.

Nancy Dingler is a Vacaville resident, writer and historian. You can e-mail her at History_Whiz10@yahoo.com.

Early transportation skirted area's hills

By Ian Thompson
Daily Republic Staff Writer

FAIRFIELD — Early transportation in what was to become Solano County skirted the hills on rough tracks to avoid large marshy lowlands.

Water dictated much of Solano County's early history. Just to get there, a traveler had to cross San Francisco Bay from the southwest, the Sacramento and Napa rivers from the south and west respectively, or the massive delta marshes in the east.

Once area pioneers established ranches, farms and orchards in Solano County during the mid-19th century, the county's agricultural reputation quickly grew and county crops became important to the region. But the importance of that

Water dictated much of Solano County's history

produce depended on getting it to ships in San Francisco and markets in Sacramento.

The earliest farmers did not have rail lines of the Sacramento Northern and the Southern Pacific. At that time, it just wasn't feasible to ship by land for any long distances.

The only main road through the county, the Benicia-Sacramento stage road, twisted its way through upper Suisun and Green valleys. It also serviced the Napa area. Produce had to be shipped out through Suisun Bay and the Carquinez Straits.

In the Vacaville area, a daily stage line started in 1857 between Suisun City and Vacaville. The following year, another linked Napa and Sacramento through Vacaville and Putah Creek. There was also a connection from Suisun City to

Benicia.

It was clipper ship Captain Robert Waterman who first recognized the value of the water lanes in developing the area and he decided to locate a town on Suisun Marsh in the early 1850s.

Waterman's town, called the Suisun Rancho, was planned to be located along the fringe of the marsh from Green Valley Creek to Laurel Creek. Along that stretch, ships could reach dry land via Cordelia Slough, Suisun Slough and Suisun Creek.

Waterman picked the head of the Cordelia Slough to start his town, because it was closest to the Sacramento-Benicia Road. Since he was under the impression he held title to all other possible sites and could exclude competitors, he felt there was little risk. He established Cordelia, naming it after his wife.

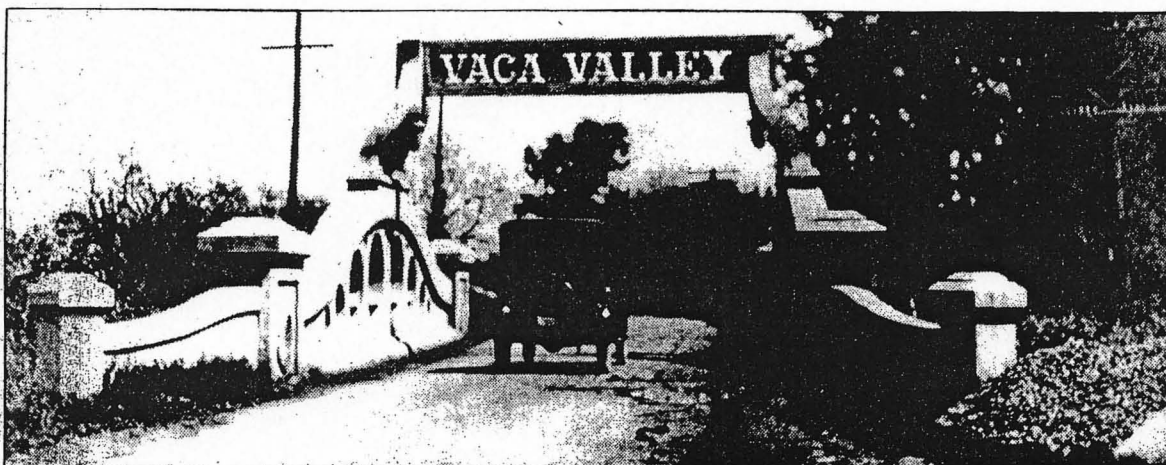
It was Josiah Wing, captain of the schooner "Anna Sophia," who proved him wrong.

Wing also hoped to establish a port for agriculture products. At the head of the Suisun Slough in 1850, Wing found a small island which rose five feet above the surrounding marsh and separated from the mainland by 100 yards of traversable marsh.

According to Waterman's grant, which included all dry land up to the edge of the marsh, Wing's island fell just beyond Waterman's claims.

Wing was soon able to economically outstrip Waterman's Cordelia shipping point from his little island. Wing's town, Suisun City, drew a larger part of the commercial activity since it was closer to Lagoon and Vaca valleys. As the area around Rockville developed, Wing also picked up some of that action as well.

By the mid-1850s, Suisun City's streets were laid out and buildings raised. The Anna Sophia couldn't handle all the trade any more, so six other vessels were employed to



Courtesy Photo

The Alamo Creek Bridge, circa 1926, was the gateway to Vaca Valley. This road is now part of Interstate 80 in the vicinity of the Alamo Road exit.

handle it.

Waterman struck back in 1854 by laying out another town just north of the marsh, Fairfield, named after his Connecticut home town. He also entered the fight with Vallejo to make Fairfield the county seat and ensure economic viability.

The plans of the Central Pacific Railroad changed the future of water shipping in the late 1860s.

In June 1868, the rails of the Central Pacific reached Suisun City from Vallejo through Jamison Canyon. On June 24, a five-car train loaded with sightseers chugged to Suisun City to celebrate the opening.

The railroad cut into Suisun City's trading area taking away produce from Pleasants Valley and Putah Creek which went through railheads at Vacaville and Elmira. Later, only hay and stone continued to be transported by water.

But by 1900, farmers could still keep Southern Pacific freight rates down by threatening to send their products out by boat. Some crops actually were sent to Suisun City to be shipped out by rail since it was cheaper to ship from there than from Vacaville.

Cordelia was abandoned and rebuilt along the railroad tracks several hundred yards north of its old site. It was also renamed Bridgeport, after Cordelia Waterman's home in Connecticut. Despite the new location, it never was able to challenge Suisun City's pro-

minence and was renamed Cordelia.

Rockville was also hit hard by the railroad. Trains took away passengers from the stagecoach which stopped at Rockville.

Rails also dealt the county's wheat industry a hard blow. That crop owed much of its importance here to close water transport and a general lack of rails in the Central Valley. The extension of SP's rails into the San Joaquin and Sacramento Valleys eliminated wheat grower's advantage here and depressed prices because of the larger supply of grain.

Suisun City did have a minor new era of prosperity when the Northern Electric Railroad (later the Sacramento Northern) came to town.

The railroad provided direct access to markets for the Vaca Valley area growers who suffered from the high rates charged by the Southern Pacific, which were higher rates than they charged elsewhere.

It was the automobile that changed fates again for those in central and upper Solano County.

The first state highway through Solano County was built from 1912-1914. It cut through Fairfield on Texas Street, bypassing Suisun City. Rising auto use in the 1920s and '30s stimulated development of a Texas Street retail district which rivaled and later surpassed Suisun City's Main Street and plaza.

Vacaville business saw the

highway coming and lobbied hard for it to go through their town. In 1913, it came to town, winding past the north side of Ulatis Creek through the Main Street business district, along Merchant Street to Alamo, around Wycoff's Hill to Pleasants Valley Road and into Lagoon Valley to Fairfield.

Heavy traffic brought about an end to old wooden bridges in the county since they couldn't handle increased loads. Soon tougher concrete ones were going up.

Only the state highway had a concrete hardtop. Dirt (or mud depending on the season) covered county roads. Road crews could only spread gravel when time and money permitted.

The state of the local roads were sources of constant complaint. One resident called the road to Elmira "absolutely impassable. I will defy the road man who was in charge of that district to drive his machine down that road."

As for the road to Winters, "I have seen dozens of machines hopelessly stuck there already this winter," the complaint read.

During the 1960s, U.S. Highway 40 was reconstructed as an eight-lane transcontinental freeway which directly linked central Solano County with expanding Sacramento and San Francisco Bay areas.

It was later renamed Interstate 80 and brought newcomers by the thousands.

Railroads

The arrival of the 'iron horse' was mixed blessing for Solano County

By Randy Bechtel
Daily Republic Staff Writer

SUISUN CITY — The coming of the "iron horse" was a mixed blessing for Solano County, which learned that railroad baron Collis P. Huntington meant by "all that the traffic will bear."

By 1879, Suisun City was the crossroads of two railroads.

The California Pacific Railroad, a company formed in 1866 by Bay area investors originally to compete with the Central Pacific Railroad in a race to cross the Sierra Nevada, brought rail to the city in June 1868.

The line, which began in Vallejo, finally reached the outskirts of Sacramento in 1868. It was purchased by the Central Pacific a year later — ironically, the same year the Central Pacific and Union Pacific celebrated completion of the na-

tion's first transcontinental railroad in Promontory, Utah.

The purchase was the first of many made by Central Pacific as part of a methodical plan by the company's "Big Four" — Huntington, Leland Stanford, Mark Hopkins and Charles Crocker — to secure a monopoly on rail traffic in California.

The railroad proved more of a curse to Suisun City than a blessing.

North county farmers, who previously had carried their crops overland to be shipped from Suisun's embarcadero, instead loaded them on trains at Elmira for loading on ships in Vallejo.

Another major blow to Suisun City's port came when the Northern Railway Co. in 1879 connected its track from Benicia to Central Pacific (later to become Southern Pacific) track in Suisun City in 1879. Northern offered another advantage in that railroad cars could be ferried from Benicia to Port Costa, where the car could transfer to Northern track running to Oakland.

The line also spelled disaster for

Rockville, which had flourished as a stop along the Benicia-Sacramento stagecoach line.

Finally, the coming of the railroad proved a mixed blessing for farmers.

In 1888, the Northern was purchased by the Southern Pacific, fixing rates so high that north county farmers again hit the roads to Suisun City because it was cheaper to ship by rail from there than Elmira or Vacaville.

Furthermore, rail extensions into the Sacramento and San Joaquin valleys nullified Solano County farmers' pre-railroad advantage of being near water transportation. The combination of the railroad and soil problems resulting from a failure to rotate crops stripped the county of its preeminence as a wheat-growing district.

A track running east from Vacaville to Southern Pacific's line in Elmira was completed in 1869 as Vacaville was emerging as a nationally acclaimed center for fresh fruit. During the 1860s the town had shipped the earliest apricots, cherries, peaches, plums and grapes to ever reach market.

In 1870 the company was

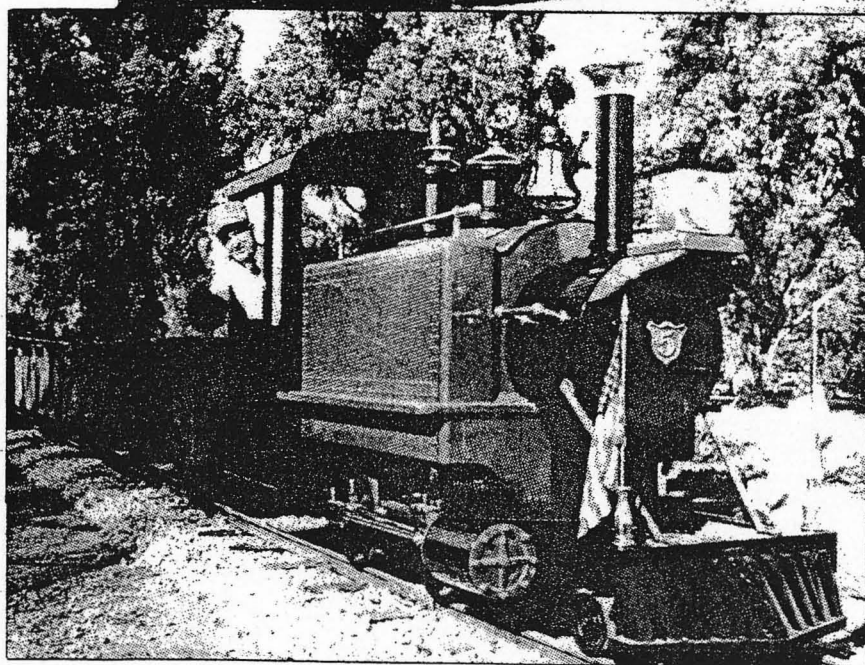
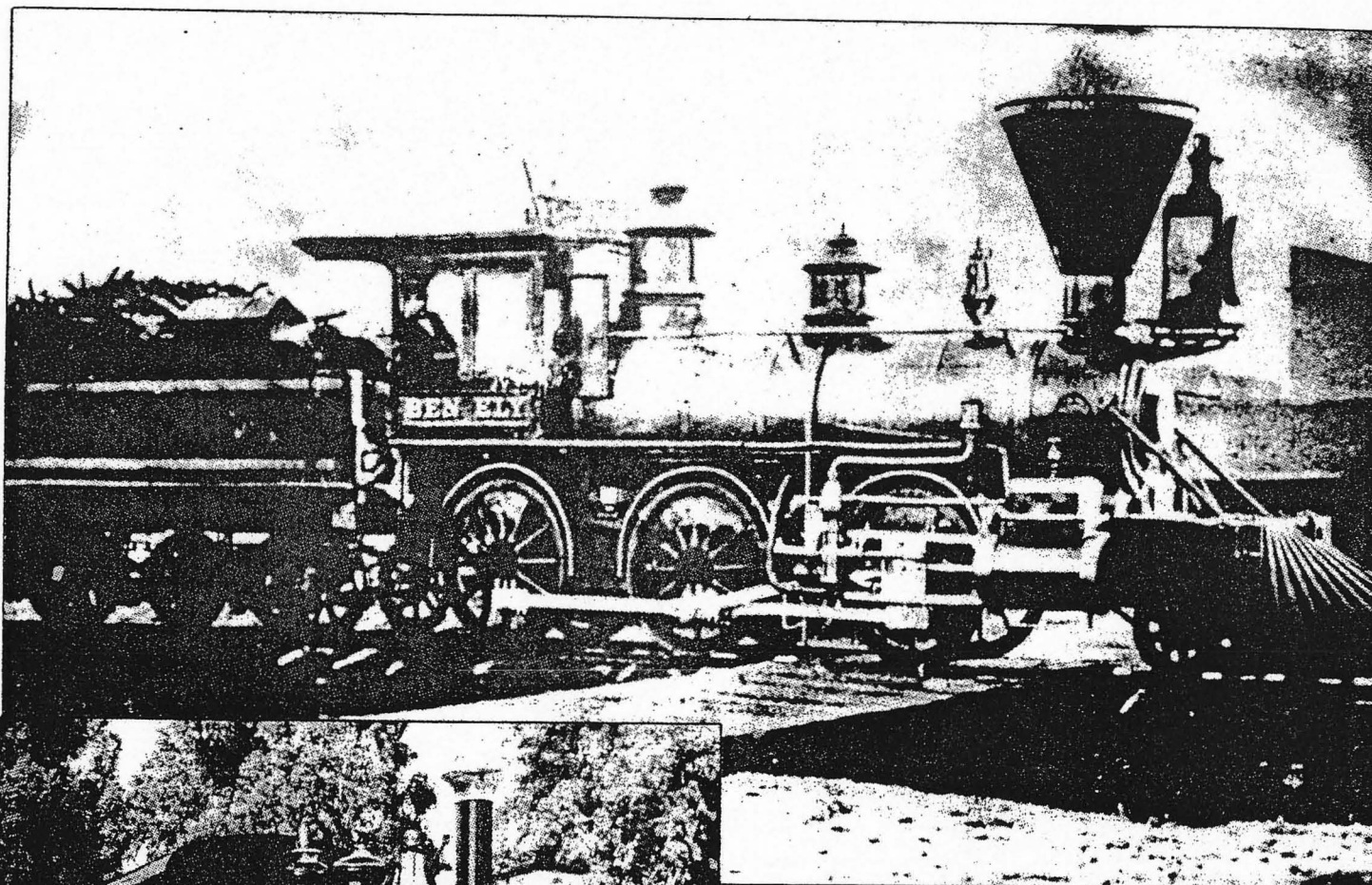
reorganized by Andrew and Bushrod Stevenson, who extended a line to Winters and managed to cut a profit for 18 years with a single locomotive, one passenger car and 10 flat cars. However, they too sold out to the Southern Pacific in 1888, although grower outrage over Southern Pacific's price fixing had been burning before that date.

Even when Southern Pacific tried to please, there seemed to be a hitch.

For instance, one Saturday night in 1891 Solano County Superintendent Daniel Corn, delayed by business in Dixon, missed his passenger train to Elmira. Corn boarded a freight train after a friendly conductor told him that although Elmira was not a scheduled stop, the train would slow down for him to hop off. Apparently the engineer didn't get the message, for the train barely slackened speed as it approached Corn's destination.

Corn jumped anyway, rolled down the embankment, picked himself up and, dazed, headed for Vacaville. He was nearly home when he discovered he had broken his collarbone.

By 1879,
Suisun City
was the
crossroads
of two
railroads



Courtesy Photos

The first locomotive on the Elmira-Vacaville railroad was known as the "Flea." Passengers and freight were carried on one end and the engine chugged and puffed on the other. Next came the elaborate and costly "Ben Fly." Today the Nut Tree serves as a joy to young and old as well as a nostalgic reminder of long past railway glory.

Heim

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COURTESY PHOTO

The Sacramento Northern in 1954, with its boxy steeple-cab motor. The 654 was retired to the Western Railway Museum at Rio Vista junction.

Fairfield-Suisun has a lot of railroad history

Editor's note: "Remember When" is an occasional series of stories submitted by readers about Solano County of yesteryear.

By Donald Heimberger

Running down the center of Fairfield and out to Solano College is the Linear Park and bike trail. It's hard to believe that 28 years ago, an electric railroad named the Sacramento Northern ran down that strip of land.

Fairfield's branch of the Sacramento Northern was part of a large electric railroad that ran from the Ferry Building in San Francisco up to the town of Chico.

In 1964, when I moved to Fairfield, the Fairfield line joined the Vacaville branch at Vaca Junction at a "Y." The third leg of track ran out to the Railroad Museum on Highway 12. The museum is on the old rail line and is well worth a visit.

Trains coming to Fairfield from Sacramento would use the Southern Pacific until they got to Cannon Junction, where they would switch to the Sacramento Northern tracks that went over Vanden Road and then to Vaca Junction and Fairfield. The track to Vacaville served Basic Vegetable plant.

In Fairfield, by Bransford School, there was Frank's Junction for a line that ran to downtown Suisun City. Richards Court was built on the roadbed. I remember the trains that ran through Fairfield from 1964-68. Most of the trains would have a 44-ton engine, four or five refrigerator cars and a wood caboose.

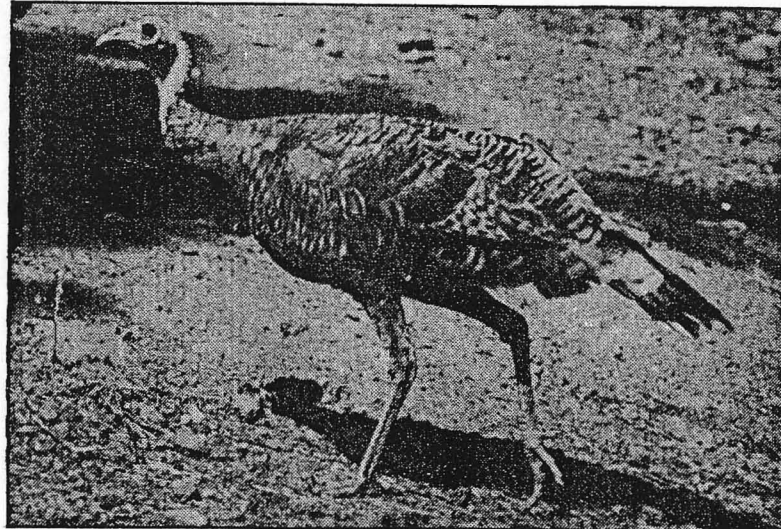
The train would run to the end of the line at Willota Station and the engine and caboose would exchange ends. On the way back to Fairfield, empty cars would be set out and full cars of pears or cherries would be on their way from the packing sheds of Suisun Valley to the markets on the East Coast.

It was a good thing for us rail fans that not all the trains that visited Fairfield had refrigerator cars. Twice a month, Diamond National Lumber had a flat car or two delivered. I also remember a special train that carried the big wooden beams for the church on Fairfield Avenue.

Even a passenger train ran down to Willota station. The Railroad Museum on Highway 12 ran a trip using two Bay Bridge trains pulled by a 70-ton locomotive. That was the last train I saw on the line.

Fairfield-Suisun has a lot of railroad history. Each time I drive over the old Sacramento Northern right of way, I wish I had taken pictures of the tracks and the trains. I don't think anyone has and it's a shame to let this historical rail line be erased from Fairfield's history.

Donald Heimberger has lived in Fairfield since 1964 and worked as a warehouseman for many years. He will celebrate his 50th birthday in February. He loves Fairfield for many reasons, including the people, the fact that it's still relatively small, good weather and good location "with everything one needs." He also praises the transportation.



Thursday,
November 22,
1990

Daily Republic/GARY GOLDSMITH

Turkeys have come out of the hills for greener grass.

Dog sends turkeys back to hills

By Ian Thompson
of the Daily Republic

GREEN VALLEY — It started as a nice tale of man and bird living together in harmony.

Then, a neighbor's dog ended Rockville Hills resident Worth Salsman's relationship with two flocks of wild turkeys.

Until late October, the two flocks of turkeys totalling about 25 birds made a daily habit of trekking through Salsman's property feeding on the grass, bugs and tomatoes Salsman grows in his garden.

"They were getting pretty tame because nobody was bothering them," Salsman

said, adding he didn't mind the visitors.

The turkeys regularly showed up at Salsman's yard between 6 and 7 every morning, he said. By 11 a.m., they usually moved on across Rockville Road to a neighbor's walnut orchard to eat and rest in the shade before returning in the early afternoon.

Over the past four or five years, the turkeys tended to keep to themselves and feed on green grass in Rockville Hills. But with the drought, Salsman thinks the usually bashful birds started wandering into local gardens and lawns for nutrition.

More than once, the seemingly oblivious parade of birds stopped cars as they

trooped across the road, he said.

"I was afraid they would cause a wreck," Salsman said.

But things changed when a neighborhood dog didn't share in the live-and-let-live attitude of the rest of the residents and killed one of the birds, he said recently.

The dog's mischief sent the rest of the birds back to the wooded hills, where Salsman figures they're hiding out.

"Nobody's seen them since then," Salsman said.

But he expects to see them again.

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Turkeys

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Page One

"They will be back next year," he said. "They usually come down in the spring time when the hatch is over."

The turkeys come over from Lake Curry, where they are found year-round in the brushy, wooded hills that provide their natural habitat. Salsman's friends have reported seeing flocks of up to 50 birds take wing from hunters, Salsman said.

"They can fly like nothing," Salsman said.

They are also "very wily, very cagey," said Ken Zanzi, wildlife management supervisor for the Department of Fish and Game, who added that hunters like them as game birds.

"They are a difficult bird to hunt," Zanzi said.

The hunting season is in March and April for the adult males and all turkeys are fair game during the fall.

Over the years, the fish and game department has helped turkeys in California expand their numbers by trapping them and moving them to new



Daily Republic/GARY GOLDSMITH

Worth Salsman really didn't mind that the wild turkeys munched on his tomato vines.

suitable habitats.

"They are doing real well," Zanzi said.

While turkeys can be found along the coast, in the Sierra Nevada foothills, and in Tehema and Shasta counties, the wild turkeys are not native to California.

They came in the late 1960s

as part of a trade with Texas. California's Department of Fish and Game gave Texas some Chinese ring-neck pheasant. In return, California got Rio Grande turkeys, Zanzi said.

Salsman's friendly fowl are not an unusual spectacle, either, Zanzi said.

"It is unfortunate that they do domesticate easily because they do transmit diseases to domestic birds," Zanzi said.

The fish and game department has received few complaints about birds like Salsman's who take a liking to humans and their gardens.

RELIGION MILLENNIUM

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A belief in a higher power

Historic Christian churches pepper area's landscape

By Amy Maginnis-Honey

DAILY REPUBLIC

FAIRFIELD -- Christianity's history in the area is evidenced by a handful of historic churches including Fairfield's Church of God, the Shiloh Church on Shiloh Road off Highway 12 and Suisun City's Congregational Church.

At the turn of the century, Sunday worship was a must for many families. They donned their finest clothes and took the horse and buggy to church.

Services were often lengthy as Sunday was honored as the Sabbath, a day to rest and honor God.

But it was also a social time. It was the one time in a week that many neighbors were at the same place at the same time.

The Catholic Church was one of the first religions in the area.

Suisun was established as a mission in 1861. The Rev. Peter Dysart, pastor at Napa's St. John the Baptist, was put in charge of the new mission. His duties included ministering to the small towns of Silveville, Rio Vista and Elmira.

During his tenure, a church was constructed in Suisun City that was destroyed by a storm in 1867. A new church, costing \$6,000, was built in 1868 and stood tall until a fire razed it in 1950. Dysart died in 1876.

Holy Spirit Catholic Church, at its current location, was dedicated in 1961. Our Lady of Mount Carmel followed in 1983.

Mary Higham helped pen the history of the Catholic Church in Fairfield and Suisun City.

"I had a wonderful time doing it," she said. In fact she still gets together for lunch with the authors and researchers. "We call ourselves the book club," she added.

The Old Shiloh church, which is surrounded by a cemetery, dates back to 1876. It was one of the earliest places for worship for settlers who came across the plains to settle in Solano County.

Called the Cumberland Presbyterian Church, it's been home to many denominations over the years and sat empty for many years.

Now, a group of citizens is leading a restoration effort.

"We're just trying to save the church from falling down in ruins," committee member Marge Winters said. "This is our history here."

There's hope for Christmas services, and many weddings and funerals are held at the historic chapel with its three-story steeple.

While the Suisun City Congregational Church has been meeting continually since 1877, it didn't move to its present

location until 1919. The original church building was on Morgan Street but was destroyed by fire.

The present Church of Christ, Scientist, started out as an Episcopal church in 1867. It was remodeled in the late 1890s and the shingle siding was added. Its high-pointed corner steeple, with its band of patterned shingles, has long been an area landmark.

A brick church was erected on 930 Empire Street in 1861 but was destroyed 21 years later in an earthquake.

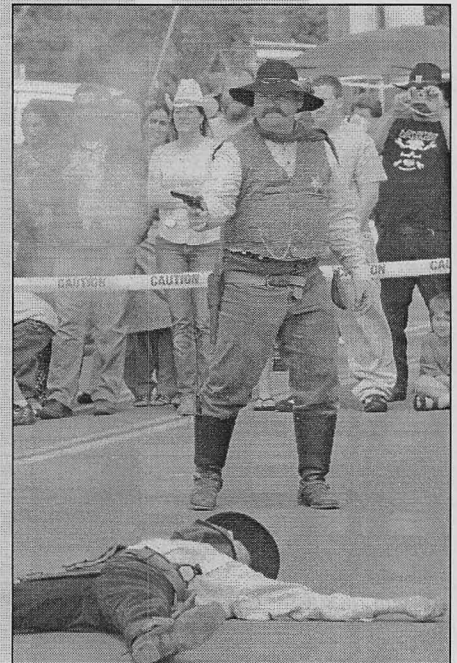
By November 1892, a new cornerstone was laid for the church. Work was completed in February 1983. The structure was remodeled in 1917. The Church of God calls it home today and hosts many events.

The number of churches continues to grow in the area as several have broken ground or purchased land for new sanctuaries.

Copy Story to Production

MOMENTS IN HISTORY

Miscellaneous Highlights



Cordelia residents celebrate Heritage and Railroad Day, 2003.



Window to the past

Ads reflect Solano 100 years ago

By Ian Thompson
Daily Republic Staff Writer

FAIRFIELD — Would you answer an advertisement announcing Dr. King's Electric Bitters, supposedly guaranteed to eliminate any bad feelings from your liver or kidney?

Perhaps you might take action on an ad from M. Dinkelspiel's general merchandise store announcing the arrival of a river schooner bringing "a select stock of holiday goods."

Both ads ran in the Solano Republican during the 1880s and '90s. Old ads reveal a lot about the county a century ago. During that time, a reader could subscribe to the weekly paper for \$3 a year.

Each edition reflected the tone of a growing agricultural county.

Dinkelspiel, later Bird and Dinkelspiel General Merchandising, announced more goods as the two decades passed — "the latest arrivals from San Francisco," according to the ads.

Sharing the page were announcements by such local merchants as the Arlington Hotel with its shaving parlour, the Pioneer Meat Market, the Criterion Drug Store, "fashionable tailor" H. Harris and the Oriole Saloon.

Where car ads dominate today's editions, it was horses 100 years ago. Ads announced the auction of fine quarterhorses and draft horses as well as the services of the Fairfield Livery Stable, blacksmithing and horseshoeing by James Thorpe, proprietor, and the like.

When M. Dinkelspiel announced the latest mower, it was the "new model Buckeye Mower," the ad of course showing it horse-drawn.

It was also a time when the phrase, "Let the buyer beware," really meant something. That was most true when it came to the wonder cures sold through

the paper from agents in San Francisco and on the East Coast.

One such cure was Dr. Pierce and Son's Magnetic Elastic Truss which, according to the good authority of Dr. Pierce, "instantly relieves every case" and "has cured thousands."

Dr. Pierce was not alone. Colleague in cures Dr. Frazier of the Frazier Medicine Co. of Cleveland claimed his root bitters would "act strongly upon the Liver and Kidneys, keep the bowels open and regular, make the weak strong, heal the lungs, build up the nerves and cleanse the blood."

This was the same doctor who tastefully advertised on page one: "Piles! Piles! Piles! A sure cure found at last!" The "sure cure" was Dr. Williams' Indian Pile Ointment.

But in a rural area such as Solano County, advertisements for animal remedies outnumbered those for humans. They included Kendall's Spawn Cure to take care of lameness and the XXX Horse Medicine touted to cure anything.

The afternoon medicinal, long extolled by imbibing grandfathers, was more than an idle excuse. It was how some whisky distillers sold their goods.

Often, the Republican carried a large front page advertisement for Tennessee White Rye Whiskey lauding the liquor as, "In bottles, for family use and recommended by physicians for nervous complaints, dyspepsia and indigestion."

Along with the questionable wonder cures, there was a considerable business in fire insurance, the only coverage advertised then.

Entire blocks could burn to the ground when all the buildings were made of wood and all the lighting was by lantern. While insurance didn't save any buildings, it did save a few fire-struck businesses from going under.

The atmosphere of Solano County's race relations also became evident in advertisements.

One May 1886 ad for a steam washer screamed, "The Chinese must go! Let everyone assist in the good work by using the Combination Steam Cleaner." According to the agent, 66 had already been sold in the county over the past two months.

Advertisements have changed a lot in the past century, but one thing remains the same. They're all trying to sell something.



Californian
W. A. Brown
S. M. Brown
San Francisco, Cal.

PRINTERS' WAREHOUSE AND ADVERTISING AGENCY,
 27 PARK PLACE AND 24-26 MONROE ST., CORNER CHURCH,
 New York.
Republian
To Dauchy & Co., Dr.
 1890

CHAMBERLAIN MEDICINE CO.
 SUCCESSORS TO CHAMBERLAIN & CO.
CHAMBERLAIN'S COLIC REMEDY
CHAMBERLAIN'S PAIN BALM
San Francisco, Cal.

PACIFIC STATES ADVERTISING BUREAU
 405-407 MONROE STREET,
 SEATTLE, WASH.
 Dec. 19/90

The General Advertising Agency
San Francisco, Cal.
Notice of Michael...

Californian
W. A. Brown
S. M. Brown
San Francisco, Cal.

Soiano Republican
 Suisun, Cal.
 Gentlemen:-
 Please insert the enclosed notice in your next issue and for three issues succeeding that, making four issues in succession, and send bill for the same to the undersigned, together with copies of the papers, and greatly oblige.

Yours truly
W. A. Brown
San Francisco, Cal.

THE DR. BUSHNELL MEDICINE COMPANY
 172
San Francisco, Cal.

True Tales, Tall Tales

Daily Republic — Saturday, February 29, 1992

Little known facts and figures about Solano County

County residents who like to break out their umbrellas should live near Mount Vaca. The 2,819-foot mountain and adjacent ridge receives an average of 35 inches of rain annually, tops in Solano County.

A wooden boardwalk ran between Fairfield and Suisun City in the late 1800s so travelers could cross muddy wetlands. Only later was this tule-covered marshland covered with dirt to form solid land.

The drinking fountain inside the Suisun Civic Center lobby has some of the coldest water of any fountain in the area. People with sensitive teeth, beware.

Dixon is one of the few cities that misspells its namesake. It was named after Thomas Dickson, who donated 10 acres of land for the town site in about 1870. But a subsequent shipment of merchandise was addressed to the town of "Dixon," and the error stuck.

It is impossible to drive on roads from the northernmost part of Fairfield to the southernmost and remain in city limits the whole journey. The distance between the northern to the southern tips is about 10 miles, as the crow flies.

Rio Vista originally had a slightly different location along the Sacramento River. However, torrential rains in 1861 and 1862 put much of the village six feet underwater, leaving 150 people homeless. A town called "New Rio Vista" soon sprang up on higher ground.

There are six self-proclaimed lakes in Solano County: Lake Herman, Paddy Lake, Lake Chabot, Lake Madigan, Lake Frey and Lake Solano. Other large bodies of water include the Lagoon Valley lagoon, Suisun reservoir and Terminal reservoir.

If current wetlands laws existed in the 1850s, Suisun City could never have been built. The site was a marshy island at the time and would have been protected.

According to city limit signs, Fairfield is more than twice as high as Suisun City. It has an elevation of 15 feet, while Suisun City's is six feet.

A World War II-era sea plane tender was named the U.S.S. Suisun, in honor of Suisun Bay. However, the men on board mispronounced the name as "Soo-ee-son," according to local resident Ed Lippstreu, who served on the vessel during the Korean War.

Solano County has at least 14 islands, according to local maps. Many are created by sloughs.

Electric trains, not bikes, used to travel down the corridor now used for Fairfield's Linear Park. The Northern Electric was established in the area in about 1913 and connected the Suisun Valley with Suisun City, as well as Suisun City with Vacaville.

Phone service in Solano County celebrates its 107th birthday this month. It started in February 1885.

There is a street name in Solano beginning with every letter of the alphabet — barely. The only entry for "x" is X Street on Travis Air Force Base.

Mineral water from Tolenas Springs was popular at the turn of the century, when it was bottled and sold. Prior to that, the area had been an early Indian spa called the "Land of Healing Waters." The spring is located in the hills north of Fairfield.

By Barry Eberlin,

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Highlights in Solano County history

By Ian Thompson

DAILY REPUBLIC

n Solano County's earliest residents were the Patwin, part of a larger Wintun tribe. It is estimated Solano County was home to between 3,000 and 5,000 American Indians.

n Jose De Canizares becomes the first European to set foot in Solano County when the Spanish explorer took shelter in what is now Benicia's Southampton Bay on Aug. 15, 1775.

n Angry over Patwin raids on mission lands, the Spanish returned in 1810 and 1817 to start the eradication of the Patwin culture by burning several villages to the ground with the Patwins inside.

Thanks to smallpox that was carried back from a Mexican trading expedition to Fort Ross in 1837, only 200 Patwins still survived by 1852.

n Chief Francisco Solano was the Catholic name for the Patwin Sem Yeto who joined Gen. Mariano Vallejo in completing the subjugation of area tribes and bringing more of Solano County under Mexican control.

n John Wolfskill arrives from Kentucky and becomes the first Yankee to settle in Solano County when he settled a ranch on Putah Creek near Winters in 1842.

n Jose Francisco Armijo arrives in 1840 to set up his rancho in Suisun Valley, establishing his home where the Rancho Solano golf course now is. Manuel Vaca, Felipe Pena and their families arrive to settle in Lagoon Valley two years later. n Benicia's founder, Robert Semple is among a group of settlers and trappers who surrounded Vallejo's home in Sonoma and took him prisoner in the June 14, 1846 Bear Flag revolt.

The revolt nearly came to a bloody halt at Manuel Vaca's home the next night when the Bear Flaggers, on their way to Sacramento with their prisoner, ran into a Mexican rescue party. Vallejo refused to permit the rescue, confident he would be released in Sacramento.

n One night in 1848, Semple declared coal, not gold, would make California a state. he sticks to his assertion despite seeing a fist full of gold discovered on the American River. Needless to say, history proved the otherwise astute man wrong.

n Benicia is founded in 1848 followed by Vallejo a year later. Both cities hosted the young state's capitol before it moved to Sacramento to stay.

n The military makes its first impression by establishing an arsenal and western headquarters for the U.S. Army at Benicia in 1851. Mare Island Naval Shipyard is established in 1854.

n Clipper ship Capt. Robert Waterman decides he wants to control central Solano County's economic future by buying up all the waterfront land and establish Cordelia as the major shipping port in 1950.

n Another clipper ship Capt. Josiah Wing does Waterman one better by finding an island on the Suisun Slough just outside Waterman's claims and established Suisun City shortly after.

n Angered at Wing's

successful venture, Waterman retaliates by planting Fairfield on the landward side in 1956 and is instrumental in making it the county seat in 1858.

n Manuel Vaca agrees to sell Kentucky lawyer and settler William McDaniel nine square miles of land in 1851 to establish a town on for \$3,000 and the promise to name it after him. A year later, Vacaville is founded.

n Vaca Valley fruit orchards that surrounded 19th-century Vacaville combined with the arrival of railroads, give the town a national reputation for agricultural commerce.

n On April 19, 1892, a large earthquake knocks a good portion of Vacaville to the ground. City fathers took the hint and incorporated the town in July.

n After black gnats drive Army Corps of Engineers surveyors out of Dixon, Travis Air Force Base - then called the Fairfield-Suisun Army Airfield - is build in 1942 six miles east of Fairfield.

n Combined with the completion of Interstate 80 after the war, Travis AFB's economic influence spurs Fairfield's growth from 3,100 people in 1940 to 89,000 people today.

n The Monticello Dam is finished in 1957, creating both Lake Berryessa and the Solano Irrigation District.

n Suisun City gets some of its own back from Fairfield in the 1980s when the entire city is put into a ambitious redevelopment district which has completely changed the town's once-languid waterfront.

and brought in new businesses.

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School fight songs a thing of past

By Barry Eberling

DAILY REPUBLIC

FAIRFIELD - The big football game between Armijo and Fairfield high schools has just ended (in a tie, to be diplomatic) and the Armijo students and alumni rise to their feet and sing:

``Hail, Armijo, hail,

Hail, purple and gold.

Onward to victory,

Behind our Indian bold.

Forward we go,

We will not fail.

Sing to our alma mater,

Hail! Hail! Hail!"

Not to be outdone, the Fairfield High students and alumni raise a ruckus by stomping on the aluminum bleachers and singing:

``Hail to Fairfield High School,

Red, white and black.

This we remember when

We're looking back.

With all our spirit, honor and pride,

Onward to victory, Fairfield High School."

The above scene is a fabrication, but hardly far-fetched. High school students have traditionally sung their alma maters after sporting events. And those really are the Armijo and Fairfield school songs.

But it never happens. These days, alma maters are out of fashion locally.

Armijo Principal Rae Lanphear keeps his school's songs - there are several versions - under a glass case in his office. He's one of the few people who knows they are there.

Alma maters were once the local rage. Armijo alumni David Marianno recalls his Class of 1952 singing the Armijo song at football games, along with a few unofficial school songs of their own. Among them:

``Give a cheer, give a cheer,

or the boys who drink the beer,

And the cellars of old Armijo High.

They are brave and they are bold

And the whisky they can hold,

Is a story never told."

And the ever-popular:

``Send the principal out for gin and don't let the sober seniors in."

``Today, you wouldn't be allowed to sing that," Marianno said.

Those raucous evenings singing the school song in the bleachers are from a different era, back when Fairfield had a few thousand residents. Marianno said the whole town showed up for the Friday night football games.

``Everybody was related to a football player, so they had to come down and watch," he said.

He thinks singing a school song added something.

``Togetherness," Marianno said.

Armijo had other songs as well through its 107-year history. Among them is the school hymn:

Hail, Armijo,

Thy praises we sing.

Humbly before thee,

Our homage we bring.

Still guide us in your wisdom,

Wherever our paths may lead.

Be thou our inspiration,

Hail to thee!"

During the 1970s, earth shoes, bell bottoms and ``Have A Nice Day" smiley faces were in and Armijo school songs were out. Class of 1978 alumni Rosemary Southward has no recollection of them.

``It wasn't about tradition, it was about catchiness: `Can we dance to that?' " Southward said.

Lanpheir was dean of students in the late 1970s. He said he brought the alma mater back in 1977, but that it faded away again sometime after he left in 1980. Current Armijo junior Dana Berry is happy to relegate the Armijo alma mater and the school hymn to Lanpheir's office. The worshipful attitude toward a school is out, she said.

She wouldn't stand up at a football game and start singing the school hymn, she said.

``I don't even think I'd hum," Berry said with a laugh.

Fairfield High School came into existence in the mid-1960s. Its alma mater also went out of vogue in the 1970s. Clyde Carpino, activities director since 1977, thought the school once had an alma mater, but was unsure.

Band director Russell Campbell came across the song in a file. He tried to resurrect it at a football game a few years

ago.

The band passed out the words to the spectators, Campbell said. Then the band played the song.

“By the time we got done with the thing, the stands were empty,” Campbell said. Current Fairfield High junior Alisha Johnson thinks the alma mater would fizzle at football games if there were another comeback attempt. “There's school spirit, especially when it's us against them (Armijo),” Johnson said. But, she said, “I don't think a song is so much what would get people spirited.” Lanpheir wears his enthusiasm and pride for Armijo on his sleeve. He keeps displays of the school's history in the front office. And he would like to revive the tradition of singing the alma mater after games.

“In fact, I'm so interested in that, I think I'll take it to student leadership,” Lanpheir said.

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A walk down memory lane

Fairfield's newest McDonald's is a treasure trove of local history

By Douglas Robson

of the Daily Republic

FAIRFIELD - What do actor Pat Morita, musician Johnny Colla and former Fairfield mayor Gary Falati have in common?

You might know that all three graduated from local high schools. But starting today their photos adorn the walls of the city's newest McDonald's.

It may be an unlikely place to find a trove of local history, but history is the goal of restaurateurs Regina Yin and C.C. Yin.

The couple, who own and operate eight McDonald's franchises in Solano County, including Fairfield's latest on the corner of West Texas and Beck streets, have decorated the restaurant with dozens of historical photographs gleaned from Fairfield and Armijo high school yearbooks dating back to 1913.

The pictorial collage - captured in about 35 framed photos circling the restaurant's interior - depict a timeline of different styles and eras in American history.

In a 1914 shot of Armijo girls basketball team, the members wear full-length dresses. A number of players from Fairfield High's 1975 boys basketball team sported outrageous Afros. A photo from the 1940s commemorates Armijo students who served during World War II.

McDonald's, the world's largest restaurant chain and known for its reliable quarter-inch thick fries and familiar golden arches, has never been a prime candidate for iconoclasm.

But by digging into Fairfield's past, the Yins are taking a distinctly anti-generic approach to their expanding franchise empire.

"I want to preserve the heritage that we have," the diminutive Regina Yin said last week as construction crews worked on the restaurant's final touches. "We've come a long way."

She got the idea for the project through her community work with local schools. A member of the Fairfield-Suisun Rotary Club, she has played an integral role in resuscitating Interact Clubs at Fairfield and Vanden high schools. The student service organization works with Rotarians on community projects and acts a bridge between business people and students.

Hoping to tap into the education-business alliance, Regina Yin went to the principals of both high schools and to the superintendent of the Fairfield-Suisun Unified School District for permission to use the yearbook pictures. All three fully supported the project.

"Younger students will get a sense of history of the schools," said Superintendent Darrel Taylor, adding that the project provides a "good strong link between business and schools."

"I think that is real positive," he said.

Regina Yin also thinks the photos will help connect the present to the past and promote traditional values.

"We shouldn't let them get lost," she said.

And like the smart entrepreneurs they are, the Yins also hope that their \$2,500 investment will boost sales. High schoolers are known to frequent burger chains. Being able to glimpse their past should add an incentive to eat there, they said.

As for the photos, there's plenty of nostalgia and history. The curious may even want to poke their heads in to see the incongruous assemblage of a few of Fairfield's more well-known children.

Morita, a 1949 graduate of Armijo, went on to Hollywood fame as Arnold on the television series "Happy Days" and later as Mr. Miyagi in the "Karate Kid" movies. 1970 Armijo graduate Colla plays for the Huey Lewis and the News rock band. And Falati, who personally signed his 1957 Armijo "President's Cabinet" photo, parlayed his nascent political skills into the Fairfield mayoralty. Other photos reveal fashions and cultural mores of days past. The 1971 Interact Club photo shows that only boys participated then. Today it is 95 percent female, according to Regina Yin.

Aerial shots of the city from 1939 and 1990 illustrate Fairfield's dramatic transformation from a rural town into an urbanized county seat.

1964 was apparently a big year for Armijo's "Future Homemakers of America" club, judging by the number of females in this photo.

"Now if you have a photo like that the girls would be screaming!" Regina Yin said. The Yins are a historical study themselves. Born and raised in rural Taiwan, they met as students in their 20s at the University of Washington in Seattle. After working in separate fields for several years - she as a social worker, he as a construction engineer - they decided to go into business for themselves, eventually buying several McDonald's in the East Bay.

"We always wanted to get into a business where we could work with people," said Regina Yin.

Longing to return to their small-town roots, they sold their East Bay franchises and moved to Vacaville, where they bought several more.

With this latest addition, the couple owns four restaurants in Fairfield, three in Vacaville and one in Suisun City, making them the biggest single McDonald's owner/operator in the county. They employ about 250 people, Regina Yin said.

Those interested in reprints of the photos are encouraged to contact New Village Studio in Fairfield, which prepared the photographs.

The new McDonald's begins serving lunch at 10 a.m. today.

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Gary Goldsmith /DAILY REPUBLIC

Jerry Bowen takes a photo of an old picture of Birds Landing's J.E. Bird store. Vacaville Heritage Council preserves fading memories

By Ian Thompson

DAILY REPUBLIC

VACAVILLE - Local historian and photographer Bob Allen peered over his glasses at the black-and-white picture the woman was holding.

"Neitzel, that's Wilmore Neitzel," the older woman said with the certainty that can only come with personal acquaintance.

She wrote the name on the back of the old photo of the smiling matronly-looking woman standing next to a man in a business suit.

This spurred a short, general discussion among the small group about Neitzel's life as a teacher.

Then the group went back to work.

The photo was one of thousands the small, dedicated group pulls out of boxes every Thursday morning in the bottom floor of the old Vacaville City Hall at 618 Main St. There, they try to attach names, dates and places to the photos, drink coffee and share pleasantries.

This is how the Vacaville Heritage Council is trying to preserve its town's history before the memories fade.

It is quite a job, joked Jerry Bowen, who set up the computer programs that the council uses to catalogue the photos and the Solano County Archival Center in Fairfield to index county records.

"There are 44 more boxes (of photos) out in the shed," Hal Holbrecht said from the end of the table.

None of those are assembled; consider the historical detective work.

"If you have the interest in history, it's fun," Bowen said.

The entire building is an archive of Vacaville and upper Solano County history. Lantern slides, photos and glass plates are stored in former jail cells. Filing cabinets line the garage where the town's fire engine sat. Shelves of books, magazines and old family records populate the building's back rooms.

Two of the rooms serve double duty as improvised dark rooms.

Upstairs is the Solano Genealogical Society and its own growing collection of filing cards that allow interested residents to trace their family roots back to the days of the ranchos.

Longtime historian Bert Hughes points out Fairfield is also making large strides in preserving its heritage, thanks to the archives established in the Solano County central warehouse.

Hughes, Bowen and others are also in the midst of carefully putting the county's century-old deeds, births and grants on

a computer database to allow researchers to find in minutes what it once took days of thumbing through volumes of handwritten entries.

The air-conditioned, well-guarded location at 1745 Enterprise Drive, Bldg. 2, Suite A, is a very welcome change from the drafty, leaking former furniture warehouse that was on Union Avenue where the archives once were located.

"It is one of the oldest and best historical resources in the county," Commission President James said. "The records go back before statehood."

Those perusing the records can find the handwritten signatures of pioneers such as Benicia founder Robert Semple, the man who also headed the California Constitutional Convention, and Green Valley farmer, Granville Swift, whose home is now the Green Valley Country Club and ran up the flag during the 1846 Bear Flag revolt.

The commission is still looking for Pentium computers to speed up the work and for volunteers with data entry, computer and library skills. For more information about the Solano County Archives, call on Tuesday or Friday between 9 a.m. and 1 p.m. at 421-4843.

Copy Story to Production

Legacy of Chinese Americans in Solano focus of exhibit

By Andrew LaMar

DAILY REPUBLIC

VACAVILLE — An exhibit on the history of Chinese Americans in Solano County will open Monday and run through Feb. 28 at the Vacaville Chamber of Commerce, 300 Main St.

The exhibit will include illustrations, photographs, artifacts and written

reports on the history. It will be free and open to the public 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday.

"Our hope is number one, that the Chinese, that this is really a way to impart their history to them," said Kris Delaplane-Conti, who helped coordinate the exhibit.

"Many of the Chinese in this area are newcomers, but they have a rich heritage

in Solano County. They were very much a part of our early history."

Delaplane-Conti, who is the oral historian for the Vacaville Museum, will provide an overview of Chinese-Americans' history locally in the 1800s.

Other exhibit contributions are: an introduction on the Chinese pioneer farming families in Suisun Valley by Peter Leung, a senior lecturer in Asian

American studies at the University of California, Davis; a presentation on Vacaville's Chinese community by Ruth Begell, director of the Vacaville Museum; and a report on Vallejo's Chinese community from the 1800s on and its role in Mare Island by Jim Kern, director of the Vallejo Naval and Historical Museum.

For more information, call 447-3333.

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Museum culture thrives

By Charles Levin

of the Daily Republic

F AIRFIELD - Museums are the hallowed halls of culture and history, not only preserving but validating our very existence.

Yet Solano County is not the first name that comes to mind when one thinks of a museum.

“As time developed, everybody thought of Sacramento and San Francisco and nothing in between, which is not true at all, because Solano County has a tremendous history,” said Lee Fountain, former past president of the Solano Historical Society and editor of its newsletter, The Solano Historian.

True, Solano's museums won't compete anytime soon for the current Monet exhibit, but that's OK. They focus instead on the county's unique history and rich cultural fabric - Vacaville's agriculture, Benicia's capitol buildings, Vallejo's naval history, dredging in the delta.

Like museums everywhere, however, they face tough fiscal times as government funding for history and culture dries up.

“Funding is always tough,” said Ruth Begell, director of the Vacaville Museum. “But the museums in this county are strong. We loan each other ideas, and I think there's a strength in collaborations. The only way nonprofits will survive in the next few years is through collaboration with other museums and nonprofits.” What follows is a list of Solano County's museums with their addresses, phone numbers, hours and admission rates:

n Vacaville Museum, 213 Buck Ave., Vacaville, 447-4513; 1-4:30 p.m. Wednesday through Sunday, adults \$1, students 50 cents, free on Wednesday, members free.

n Dutra Museum of Dredging, 345 St. Gertrudes Ave., Rio Vista, free admission, groups of 10 or more, hours by appointment only, 374-5701

n The Western Railway Museum, Highway 12, Solano County midway between Fairfield and Rio Vista, 374-2978, 1-5 p.m., Saturday, Sunday and Monday holidays, adults \$5, youths (4 to 15 years) \$2, children under 3 free.

n Benicia Camel Barn Museum, 2060 Camel Road, Benicia, 745-5435, 1-4 p.m. Wednesday through Sunday, regular admission \$2, seniors and children \$1.

n Fischer-Hanlon House, West Grand First Streets, Benicia, next door to capitol, noon to 3 p.m. Saturday and Sunday, free admission.

n The Vallejo Naval and Historical Museum, 734 Marin St., Vallejo, 643-0077, 10 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Tuesday through Saturday, adults \$1.50, seniors and students 75 cents, children under 12 free.

n Rio Vista Museum, 16 North Front St., Rio Vista, 374-5169, 1:30-4:30 p.m., Saturday and Sunday, free admission.

n Travis Air Force Museum, Travis Air Force Base, 424-5605, main entrance admittance: stop at Visitor's Center for pass and provide driver's license, registration and proof of insurance, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday, noon to 5 p.m. Sunday, free admission.

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Local woman runs genealogy site

Solano searches made on Web page

By Kristyn Giles

DAILY REPUBLIC

FAIRFIELD - Looking for someone dead or alive? Solano County's CAGenWeb site may be a place to start.

The 2-year-old Internet site is where Bob Denman, a man from Bradford, Penn., is looking for a ``gal from Napa" named Gail Wood and fellow co-workers from Mare Island Naval Shipyard, Travis Air Force Base or Solano Community College's aeronautics program.

Boyd and Mary Compton of New York City are searching for a deceased relative, James Compton, who was born in 1867 and has a brother born in Vacaville in 1875. The site, found at www.compuology.com/cagenweb/socomain.htm, is the baby of Fairfield resident Monica Loken, who ``adopted" the site in 1996. While surfing the Web for genealogy pages, she found the CAGenWeb site.

The CAGenWeb page is the mother site for a family research project throughout the state. Solano County's site was up for ``adoption," and Loken excitedly took on the obligation.

``It seemed pretty easy and not too time-consuming, so I decided to give it a shot," she said.

At the time, she didn't know what ``html" or ``ftp" meant. Luckily for her, the site came with pre-formatted, press-and-do tutorials so Loken learned quickly. Soon enough, the site was constructed.

Basically, it's a billboard for requests. People interested in posting their search can e-mail Loken, who posts messages and updates the site periodically.

The work is all volunteer. For Loken, it's sometimes a juggling act with her Solano County Office of Education career and work at Blue Chip Cookies outlet.

``I don't remember how long it took to get a response, it seems like so long ago," she recalled.

Many responses come from people outside of Solano County, people whose lives or whose family's lives have criss-crossed the county. Some people look for long-lost relatives. Some like Virginia resident Jerry Mattheis just want old friends to write.

Generally, Loken doesn't hear from the requester again. But she does what she can to help, e-mailing them reminders about the query and launching links to other local sites to help the research.

Solano County's Genealogical Society Inc., local libraries, museums, family history centers, historical societies and more are all linked.

Researching your family roots is much like putting together a puzzle," she said. ``Only this one doesn't come in a box with a set number of pieces, (and) finding one piece can create several more."

Much of Loken's family history has been recorded already. Her mother e-mails cousins for information, and information on her great-grandmother dates back to about 1500. When she has time, Loken works on another niche - her

grandfather's side.

He was born in Canada to parents who were born in Norway. A few months later, he was adopted by relatives and moved to North Dakota. Anything past Norway is difficult to find.

The Website is a source for others who may be stuck in similar situations. Loken is no professional researcher, but if she can answer questions, she will. ``I think others should research their families," she said. ``It helps to know where you came from in order to know who you really are. And, of course, most importantly, you should always know about your family health history."

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Amy Maginnis-Honey /DAILY REPUBLIC

Jim Fawson furthers his family roots research at the Mormon Family History Center.

Getting to the root of families

Mormons offer free genealogy assistance

By Amy Maginnis-Honey

DAILY REPUBLIC

FAIRFIELD - ``It's my hobby. I collect dead people," joked Jim Fawson.

Fawson is one of about 25 volunteers at the Latter-day Saints Church Family History Center on Camrose Avenue.

His ``collection" has produced a family history book, complete with full-color photos that would be the envy of any genealogist.

Family is a priority within the Mormon faith. ``We believe in sealing families in eternity," said Marilyn Sanders, another Family History Center volunteer. ``We want people to have all the links in their family chain."

``It says in the Bible, 'What God has joined together let no man put asunder,' " Fawson said. ``We are the only church that believes in baptism for the dead." (For this to happen, a descendant must ``stand in" for his deceased ancestor in a special ceremony in a Mormon temple.)

In two years, Fred and Edna Barnes went from knowing little about his ancestors to publishing 300 copies of a hardbound book on the topic.

``It all started in Hartford, Conn., in 1635 with Thomas Barnes," Fred Barnes said. He's traced his roots all the way back to 965 through a variety of means, including trips to England and visits to the local Mormon Family History Center.

``It was the primary place. It was helpful to us," Barnes said. ``I went in one day and told them I knew nothing about genealogy and I wanted to get started." He looked up his grandmother's maiden name and the information began to flow. The rush hasn't subsided.

When Barnes published his family book in 1994, he had discovered 1,700 ancestors. Now he's found 8,000.

``Sometimes my wife and I just look at each other and say, 'We've got a disease,' " he said of the time spent on research. They call one room in their Fairfield home the ``genealogy room."

``Now I know enough to be dangerous," he jokes of his research.

The Latter-day Saints began collecting data 105 years ago. Information is gleaned from birth, death and marriage certificates, ship passenger lists and census reports, to name a few sources.

The names of more than 2 billion people who have lived since 1500 can be accessed through the Mormon church.

And, as of May 24, the church posted the material on the World Wide Web, giving people entry to a database with links

to some 400 million names and another 240 million to be added later this year. It can be found at www.familysearch.org

Its debut was so popular, the site had to shut down for six hours. It was getting 500 hits per second.

But that doesn't scare the dedicated volunteers at the local Family History Center. "I think we'll see more people doing genealogy," Fawson said.

The volunteers at the center offer the following tips to get you started:

- n Do your homework. Talk to every relative you can, to get as much information as possible.

- n Knowledge of geography and history are helpful.

People will collect information off the Mormon Website but not know how to compile it. "The Internet is a tool. We'll help them with bringing the package together," he said.

The church has more than 3,200 family history centers in 64 countries. More than 100,000 rolls of microfilm are circulated to the centers each month.

The local one has a host of microfiche and microfilm machines, computers and a copier. Reference books are plentiful, as is a volunteer staff, most of whom have traced their own family history.

The service is free and open to the public, regardless of denomination. Nominal fees, like 20 cents per sheet and a nickel for a printout, are charged. It's just enough to cover the cost of the supplies.

The local volunteers give about 500 hours a month of their own time to help others. "It's really a labor of love," said Nanciann Taylor, another Family History Center volunteer.

People seek the center's assistance for a variety of reasons, including family reunions and a death in the family. "You realize your own mortality," Taylor said of the latter.

When our grandparents were alive the nuclear family existed. Today, people are looking to get back to that," Fawson said.

The center even has a fill-in-the-blank sheet to help people get started.

"You work from the known to unknown. You start with yourself and work backward," Fawson said.

Sanders has traced her lineage back to Mormon pioneer stock.

Another volunteer, Wanda Lunsford, has discovered she's has roots in royalty: King Charlemaine.

"If you have a tie to a royal family, it's easier to get further back into your history. There's nothing more exciting than finding your family," Lunsford said.

Ironically, the local volunteers say, many Mormons don't research their family tree, often believing another relative is doing the task.

But the volunteers will tell you it's a job that's never done. "There might be a new child born or you may come up with a new name," Fawson said.

Mormon Family History Center

2700 Camrose Ave., Fairfield

425-2027

10 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. and 7 to 9:15 p.m. on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays

11 a.m. to noon on the second and fourth Saturdays of the month

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Cunningham makes history

Ex-Fairfield resident honored for genealogy contributions

By Amy Maginnis

of the Daily Republic

FAIRFIELD - Solano County history is filled with names such as Gen. Marianno Vallejo and Capt. Robert Waterman.

It's time to add Rose Cunningham to the list.

Cunningham, a former Fairfield resident who recently moved to Texas, will be honored Friday at the Conference of California Historical Societies in Folsom with an Individual Award of Merit.

"She's saved Solano County history. She rescued it," said Mary Higham of the Solano County Historical Society.

Cunningham was nominated by the local historical society and Lee and Matthew Fountain. "They are making a big do about my having a lot of fun," said Cunningham, via the phone. "Nothing in life is a straight line. Everything comes full circle. I got everything back."

Her interest in genealogy began in 1968 when she was asked to update the family history done by her paternal grandfather, who was a genealogist. The last information had been written in the 1920s.

She quickly filled in the years and has been doing it ever since.

"I feel sorry for anyone who is disconnected (from their family's roots). Children need to be connected to the generations," she said.

For one week, she had five generations in her Fairfield home.

"I let the older ones sit down with the kids and the kids asked them all kinds of questions," she said. "Too many children are not connected and they have no concept of old and what the value of old is."

Cunningham "fell into" organizing and protecting early official records of Solano County.

She contacted Higham about doing genealogy, mentioning that she was able to glean information and keep records. Higham suggested she do it for the area cemeteries. "I did an inventory of the records and one thing led to another," Cunningham said. "Suddenly I was an expert but I was just a person with a big mouth."

Then, when it was time to tear down the county clerk's warehouse to make room for a new county jail, Cunningham and Nadine Stevenson did an inventory and found many instances where one book in a series was in one building and its companion was in another building. They took on the task of uniting the books.

One of her proudest moments was going before the Board of Supervisors and appealing to them not to just store old records in steel containers in the parking lot.

"They were wonderful. They even paid for a storehouse. We moved the records with the help of some inmates," she said.

The Solano County Historical Society has affectionately named Cunningham ``The Bag Lady" because for years she recycled aluminum cans and glass bottles, using the money for materials for the archives.

Canton, Texas, Cunningham has met up with former Fairfield resident Sybli Creasey and is already active in starting archives there.

``There's a big sense of genealogy here," Cunningham said.

Copy Story to Production

Society's book aimed at preserving Solano's history

By Barry Eberling
of the Daily Republic

FAIRFIELD — A stone chapel on Suisun Valley Road was born out of the national rancor that led to the Civil War.

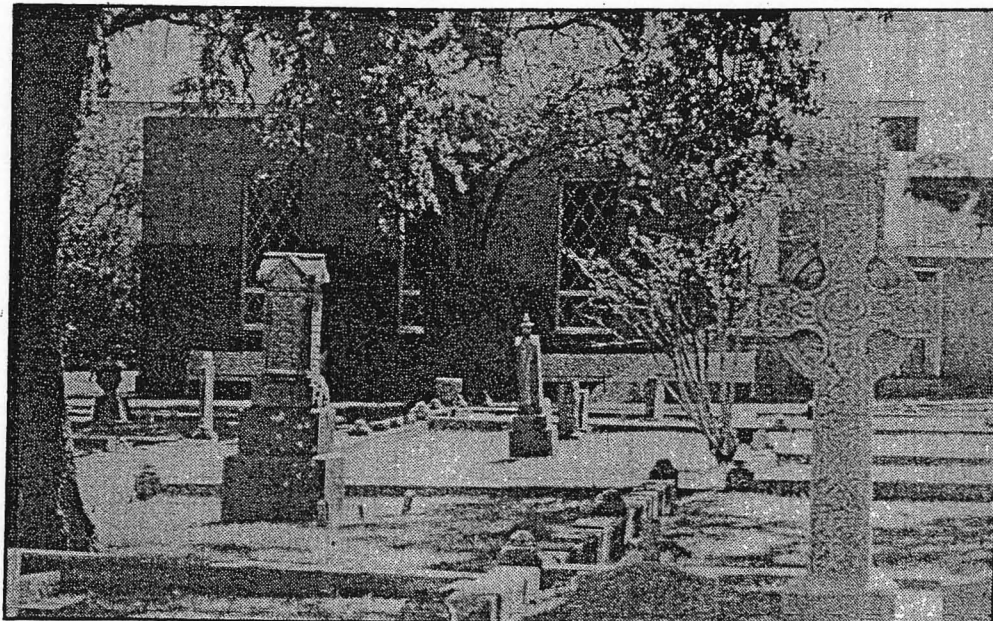
Two local stone masons built the chapel in about 1856 for the Methodist Episcopal Church South, which split from its Northern branch over slavery. When the war broke out five years later, the church was a center for county residents who favored the South.

Most local residents probably know nothing of the chapel, nor the scores of other structures that date back to Solano County's pioneer days. But they will if they buy a book scheduled to come out next year.

The Heritage Society of West Central Solano wants to make the wave of newcomers who have come to Solano County over the past couple decades aware of the area's history.

Its book will rate local homes, churches and other buildings for their historical and architectural significance.

"Growing up here all my life, I'm familiar with things that went on," said Tim Farmer, an Armijo High School teacher and member of the society. "But the vast



Daily Republic/FILE

Local residents favoring slavery built this chapel on Suisun Valley Road in 1856.

majority of people aren't natives."

"It gives people coming to the area a sense of pride to learn about it, (that) it's not just another place to live," he added.

People who recently moved into a new subdivision home might not realize that Vaca Valley was once known for its agriculture, or that Suisun City's waterfront

made the town a regional transportation center, according to Farmer.

A little knowledge can help make certain the area's history is preserved, Farmer said. He points to Stonedene mansion, a Gothic Revival-style home on Rockville Road built in about 1861.

Fairfield considered allowing develop-

ment near the mansion about one year ago. But the proposal was abandoned, both because of the building's significance and an adjacent American Indian ritual site.

"Item by item, we had to go in and say, 'Archaeologically, it's a valuable area, you may not want to do this,' " Farmer said.

The society won't start its book from scratch. "Our Lasting Heritage," a 1977 book, lists 199 structures in the county and tells their stories.

But "Our Lasting Heritage" is hard to find and is due for an update, Farmer said.

"While it was a wonderful book, there are some inaccuracies and some omissions," Farmer said. "And some of the structures aren't standing."

For example, the book describes a wooden school house that sat in the middle of Suisun Marsh, giving it an "excellent" rating. The school was used by turn-of-the-century farmers who were trying to establish dairies on wetlands.

But strong winds blew the building down since "Our Lasting Heritage" was published, according to some of the few residents who still live in the area.

The idea for the Heritage Society to list the area's historical buildings came from Fairfield, which wants the information for its General Plan update, Farmer said.

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Vaca history buff writes kids' book

By Nicole Massara

DAILY REPUBLIC

FAIRFIELD - Jim Stevenson has loved history since childhood.

As an adult, the Vacaville publisher and history buff wants to spread that interest to kids today.

That's why Stevenson published "California History for Children," a compilation of history tidbits that targets elementary school kids.

In California, the fourth-grade social studies curriculum focuses on California history. But classes often focus on one topic such as the missions or the Gold Rush, Stevenson said.

"It's a shame there isn't enough material that surveys California history for kids," Stevenson said.

Stevenson's book, which costs \$8.95, spans the state's history from Cabrillo's landing in 1542 to the San Francisco earthquake in 1906.

It also includes answers to some of the questions Stevenson receives most on his California history Website at <http://www.jspub.com>.

Questions like the lyrics to the state song or the way California got its name. This is the first children's book Stevenson has published.

Stevenson, a psychologist with the state Department of Rehabilitation, began publishing history compilations in 1994 after being disappointed with the lack of hardbound county histories. His first publication was the "History of Napa, Sonoma, Lake and Mendocino."

Stevenson went on to publish several more histories, including a book about Solano County.

"California History for Children" can be purchased through Stevenson's Website or by calling him at 469-0237. The California State Capitol bookstore is currently the only store carrying the children's book, but Stevenson hopes more local stores will begin to carry it.

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By Ian Thompson
of the Daily Republic

VACAVILLE - More than 116 years after it was originally published, Solano County's first history book is back on bookshelves.

The "History of Solano County" recounts tales, including that of Solano County pioneer John Farnham of Vallejo who met his future wife in 1867 when he rescued her during a shipwreck on the voyage to California.

The book was reprinted by an alliance of Fairfield publisher James Stevenson and the Solano County Genealogical Society.

"It was the very first history, a bird's eye view of this county's history," said local historian Mary Higham, who wrote the book's new preface.

County histories written during the 19th Century were done by subscription with publishing house agents sent out to interview the early settlers, Higham said. Each of the pioneers interviewed would be charged a fee if he wanted his story included in the history. When it was published, the person would get a copy, Higham said.

Written by J.P. Munro Frazer of Oakland and published by Wood, Alley and Co. of East Oakland, the combined history and biographical collection hit early Solano County stores in 1879.

The biographies include the stories of those like J.G. Hanks of Vallejo, who was shipwrecked twice on his way to the California gold fields, the second wreck being on Monterey.

Frazer's history records that Hanks, fed up with his misfortunes aboard ships, walked from Monterey to San Francisco to continue his journey to the gold fields. It also includes the tale of the founder of the now-vanished town of Silveyville, where founder Elijah Silvey guided gold seekers to his hotel by hoisting a red lamp at night.

Part of the lure of the book is that it was written when many of the founders of the county and its towns were still alive, said society member Ruth Setterquist. "It is written in the time and gives the feeling of the time," said Nancy Moreback, the society's publicity chairwoman.

Prior to this reprinting, the book became so scarce that the genealogical society itself had only a photocopy it got from the Solano County Library's issue. This is the Fairfield publisher's fourth foray into reprinting historical texts.

Stevenson previously published an 1873 history of Lake, Napa, Sonoma and Mendocino counties, a memoir of Gen. Mariano Vallejo descendant Platon Vallejo, and a biography of California's first and only president, William B. Ide. This reprinting marks the opening event for Solano County History month in May. The Solano County Board of Supervisors on March 14 decided to recognize history month.

The Solano County Genealogical Society is holding a book signing from 1:30-3:30 p.m. on Saturday in its library in the old Vacaville City Hall at 620 East Main St. Both Stevenson and Higham will be present to sign the new books. Only 500 copies of the book were printed and cost \$34.95.

Those interested in getting a copy can write to SCGS, Inc. P.O. Box 2494, Fairfield, Calif., 94533. Those buying the book by mail should add \$2.53 for state sales tax and \$3.50 for postage and handling.

The book will also be available after the Saturday book signing at the Vacaville Museum, the Vacaville Book Company,

and the Vallejo Naval and Historical Museum, Stevenson said.

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Vaca man records history in photos

By Elisabeth Sherwin

DAILY REPUBLIC

The Gold Rush may have taken place 150 years ago, but there are still plenty of rich historical nuggets to be mined.

This has been done in words and photographs by Kerry Drager and Charles Fracchia in "The Golden Dream" (Graphic Arts, 1997, \$32.50).

Photographer Drager grew up in Vacaville and graduated from Vacaville High School in 1971. He was the sports editor at the Fairfield Daily Republic from 1973-1974, a time when he considered himself a photo hobbyist, not a professional. (The national sports story he recalls best from that era was the Hank Aaron home run that broke Babe Ruth's record. "I always was a baseball fan," he said.)

Drager is a man of myriad interests.

"I'm interested in writing, reporting, the outdoors and photography," he said. "I also have an interest in history. And with this project, 'The Golden Dream,' it all seemed to come together."

Drager took 104 color photographs for the book, which reflect a variety of colors, compositions, geographic areas and historic interests.

But Drager is not a time-traveler. He had to take modern photographs that would reflect the past. He tried to illuminate three historic events that occurred in 1848, 1849 and 1850. They were: the discovery of gold, the Gold Rush proper, and statehood. Among his photos: Sutter's Creek, where gold was first discovered; Malakoff Diggins' restored mining town; and historic buildings in Monterey, California's capital under Spanish, Mexican and early U.S. rule.

It took Drager 1 1/2 years to shoot the photos in the book.

"I had no more than a half-dozen on file when I began the project," he said. "I had to go out with a fresh eye to places of interest and most of the time it was a lot of fun."

When wasn't it fun?

"It's not fun when you get up really early and drive from Orangevale to Monterey expecting to see a great sunrise - and it's fogged in when you get there," he said.

"But the payoff is - I spent the day shooting other stuff and that evening I got a shot of a great sunset," he added.

One of his favorite photos is another sunset shot. It's a photo of the 1886 Balclutha, a ship permanently berthed in the San Francisco Maritime National Historic Park. Tall ships similar to this one lined the bay during the Gold Rush. "I wanted to get this shot at sunset in the wintertime," said Drager. "I took one and then a tourist came out and appeared to be looking at me from a distance as I took another shot. But he wasn't looking at me. A TV crew was filming behind on the Hyde Street Pier and he was really looking at that."

"I never create a sunset or sunrise by computer or in the darkroom," he said. "What I'm really doing is photojournalism."

Drager also has shots of historic places and buildings such as the Custom House in Monterey where Commodore John Sloat raised the American flag, claiming California for the United States.

The people may be gone, but Drager says many places reflect the diversity that flourished before California became a state.

The text for Drager's photos is supplied by Fracchia, a native San Franciscan who received his bachelor's degree in history from University of San Francisco. He is currently the president of the San Francisco Historical Society.

The result is a concise history in text and photos of ``The Golden Dream."

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Daily Republic/GARY GOLDSMITH

This book is the third history James Stevenson has published since he started his business.

State's first president

finally has story told

By Ian Thompson

of the Daily Republic

FAIRFIELD - Blame California explorer and Bear Flag rebel John C. Fremont.

He is the reason that William Ide, California's first and only president, went down in history unknown, unheralded and unsung.

That will change Feb. 27 when Fairfield publisher James Stevenson reprints a 1935 biography of Ide, a leader in the 1846 Bear Flag Revolt who was elected the California Republic's president.

Ide was one of the rebel leaders who swept into Sonoma in 1846 to arrest Commandante Gen. Mariano Vallejo and declare their freedom from the Mexican government that controlled California.

During the revolt, Ide was elected "by popular acclaim by those present," according to Stevenson. He was president only 26 days before the U.S. annexed the future state.

School children are taught about Fremont's exploits, but only a handful of California historians know about Ide because Fremont couldn't stand him, Stevenson said. Fremont had the political connections that Ide lacked to write himself into the history books.

"Fremont even took Ide's horse and gave it to one of his officers," Stevenson said. "Ide had to walk to the battles in the south."

Ide's historical stature is so obscure that his descendants aren't entirely sure the only surviving portrait of Ide is really him, Stevenson said.

After a stint as a rancher and a judge, Ide died of smallpox at Monroeville in 1852. "Everyone knows who Sam Houston was (head of the short-lived Texas republic), but no one knows who William B. Ide was," Stevenson said.

This book is the third history Stevenson has published since he started his business. Stevenson's first foray, a reprint of the 1873 Historical and Descriptive Sketchbook of Napa, Sonoma, Lake and Mendicino was published a year ago for Napa area historians.

The book was originally written by Napa Reporter editor C.A. Menefee. It was one of the first county histories to be published in the state, Stevenson said. "It was also the first book to use California artists," Stevenson said. The book was a success among local historians. It can be found in local bookstores in Napa, Sonoma, Lake and Solano counties. The only regret Stevenson has is that no bookstores in Fairfield offer it.

His second effort came at the urging of Napa area historians who wanted the memoirs of Dr. Platon Vallejo republished.

Platon Vallejo was the son of Mariano Vallejo. His anecdotal memoirs cover his famous father's life and that of Vallejo's ally, the Suisun Chief Solano.

His own life connected the old Mexico territory with the California we know today," Stevenson said. "He stood on one corner of the Bear Flag when it was first painted and poured the first concrete for the Carquinez Bridge."

Stevenson was always entranced by the past. He reads history as a hobby. His first project was putting together his own family's genealogy.

When he's not at work with the California Department of Rehabilitation, he is publishing books.

Stevenson took the leap into publishing in January 1994. He now runs his small business out of a office suite on Oliver Road. He is planning to republish a Solano County history next.

"It's a way to prepare for my retirement," Stevenson said.

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Cordelia to toast its legacy

Volunteers needed for Heritage & Railroad Day April 27

By Ian Thompson
DAILY REPUBLIC

CORDELIA — Old Town Cordelia residents will be celebrating 150 years of that small town's history next month with stagecoaches, vintage railroad cars, hay rides and dancing.

"We are trying to get people excited about our history and appreciate what we have going here," said Daphne Nixon, president of the Cordelia Area Homeowners Association.

The day-long Heritage & Railroad Day runs from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. on April 27 around Thompson's Corner and the Cordelia Fire Protection District headquarters on Cordelia Road.

Nixon and a host of Cordelia area residents are trying to collect volunteers and business sponsors for the events they hope will highlight Cordelia's origins when it was founded 150 years ago.

"We are really working to get some business sponsorships," Nixon said of the group's tight finances.

In line with Cordelia's connection to the railroads, the California Northern Railroad is providing the Appekunney Mountain observation car that will be parked on a rail siding and house a photo exhibit of old Cordelia.

Historical re-enactment groups, The Blue Canyon Gang and the Bad Company, will be on hand in frontier dress to stage a robbery of the train and to hold exhibitions of what life was like in the Old West.

A Mark Twain impersonator will talk about the Gold Rush era, and a Fairfield resident dressed as Cordelia Waterman, the wife of the town's founder, will tell how Cordelia got its



COURTESY PHOTO

This photo of the Cordelia Hotel was taken in the late 1920s before it burned down.

name.

A stage coach will offer rides through town. There will also be pony rides for children and a classic Mustang car show for vintage car lovers.

A pony express rider is expected to come through Cordelia "delivering a special surprise for the children," Nixon said.

There will be a patriotic house decorating contest and a children's centennial costume contest where the youngsters are encouraged to come dressed as people from the 1850s.

The event is being held in conjunction with Fairfield's year-long centennial celebration to honor that city's 100 years of incorporation.

The proceeds will go to help

the Association preserve and beautify the Old Cordelia area which has 45 of its buildings listed on the California Register of Historic Resources.

Cordelia was founded by former clipper ship Capt. Robert Waterman in an attempt to make it the major shipping point for central Solano County's agricultural produce.

Unfortunately for Cordelia, Josiah Wing, another ship captain, discovered an island at the end of the Suisun Slough and founded the more commercially successful Suisun City.

With the coming of the railroad to Solano County, Cordelia did serve as a shipping point after residents decided to move the town 100 yards north to relocate around the rail line.

For awhile the town was renamed Bridgeport after Waterman's home town, but the original name of Cordelia was restored not long after.

This is part of the Association's efforts to preserve Cordelia's historic small town nature from development that is steadily expanding to the west and north.

"We are trying to preserve the history because it is disappearing so fast," Nixon said.

Those interested in volunteering to help organize Heritage & Railroad Days or to sponsor one of its activities, call Nixon at 651-7042.

Ian Thompson can be reached at ithompson@dailyrepublic.net.

Dec 3 2002

100 IDEAS FOR CITY'S 100th YEAR



COURTESY PHOTO

Texas Street in the early 1900s. Henry Goosen's Hardware store, left, was established in 1904. The Capitol Hotel is at the end.

Fairfield sets plans in motion for centennial celebrations

By Ian Thompson
DAILY REPUBLIC

FAIRFIELD — Seventy-seven votes made Fairfield a city on Dec. 12, 1903, while 55 other residents wanted it to stay an unincorporated town.

Even then, Fairfield was hard-pressed to get two-thirds of its population to agree on anything.

Later this month, 99 years after that election, city leaders will start 12 months of events to celebrate Fairfield's centennial.

The year is a build-up to the actual anniversary itself on Dec. 12, 1903, almost 50 years after pioneers founded Fairfield in a struggle over central Solano County's commerce.

Retired clipper ship Captain Robert Waterman placed Fairfield right on the landward side of five-year-old Suisun City in 1856 to try to trump that town's status as the shipping point for Vaca Valley, Lagoon Valley and Suisun Valley agricultural produce.

Waterman then vigorously pushed to make Fairfield the Solano County seat in 1858, taking advantage of a dispute between Benicia and Vallejo leaders, who had long battled over that honor.

The need for money to make street, sidewalk, sanitary and fire protection improvements spurred a group calling itself the Fairfield Improvement Club to lobby for incorporation.



An aerial view looking north from Suisun City shows Union Avenue and Texas Street, with the old county courthouse and old Armijo building in the center of the 1940 photo.

COURTESY PHOTO

The city will kick off the centennial at the New Year's Eve celebration at the Fairfield Community Center.

"We will toast the centennial at midnight," Fairfield Arts and Entertainment Director Bob Reich. "The glasses will have both the New Year's Eve and centennial logo."

The recently approved centennial logo was taken off the ship's bell that stands in front of Fairfield City Hall.

Through 2003, the organizers will tie the centennial to as many festivals and events as possible ranging from the Fourth of July and Doolittle Raiders parade to the Candy Festival and Holiday Night of Lights.

"We will be planning things as the year goes along to take advantages as the opportunities come up," Reich said of the still-evolving planning.

Reich is working with Solano County Historical Society members to get information on the city's past to create a display on Fairfield's heritage.

The Fairfield-Suisun School District may also tie the centennial into school curriculums, possibly even offering students a unit on local history.

"We are also thinking of doing school assemblies which we are also working out with the school district," Reich said.

The Barnes & Noble bookstore has expressed interest in holding historical storytelling since the Fairfield Library doesn't have the room in its temporary quarters.

There are plans to get merchants to offer a centennial sale in mid-December as the year's events wrap up.

The final centennial event will be held on Dec. 12, 2003, at Fairfield City Hall with city officials and people dressed in period costumes dedicating a plaque.

"It will be nothing flashy or fancy," Reich said.

Reich hopes the host of events "will give people an idea, an education of the history of Fairfield and build pride in where we live."

Ian Thompson can be reached at ithompson@dailyrepublic.net.

